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The #1 Computer Game Magazine

Computer Gaming World

NOVEMBER 1997
NO. 160

REAL-TIME SHOOTOUT

40 WINNERS & LOSERS



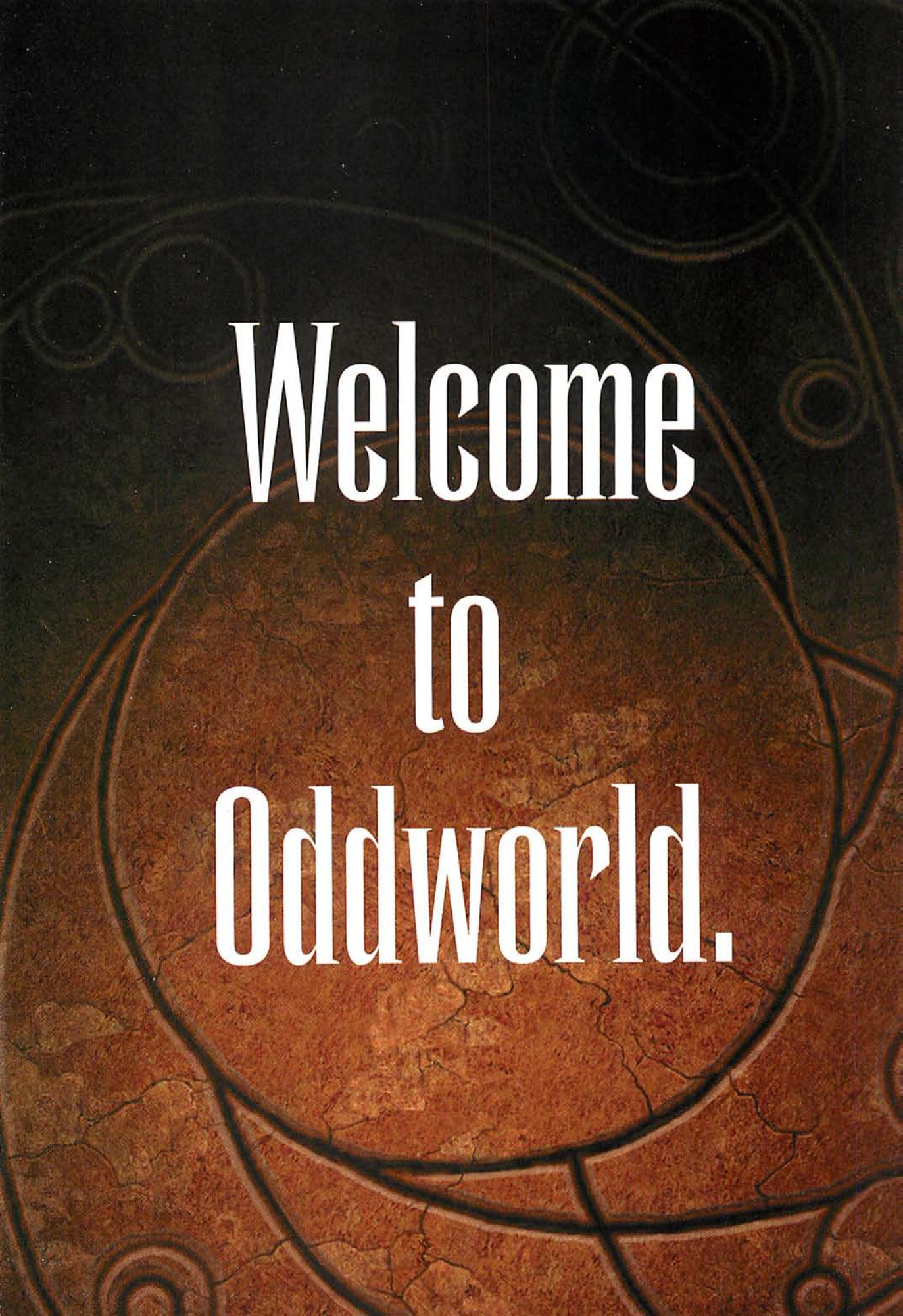
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Previews! Longbow 2, Lords of Magic, Battlezone, NBA Live 98 and More!
Strategy! Beat Dungeon Keeper, X-COM 3, Warlords III, iF-22, Extreme Assault

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need a ride?



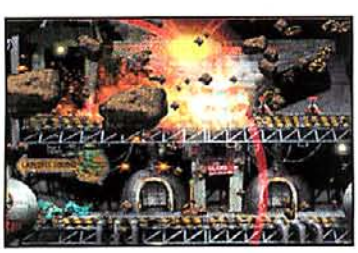
giddy-up.



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In a world run by meat barons and corporate scum, your entire race is pie filling.

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ow!

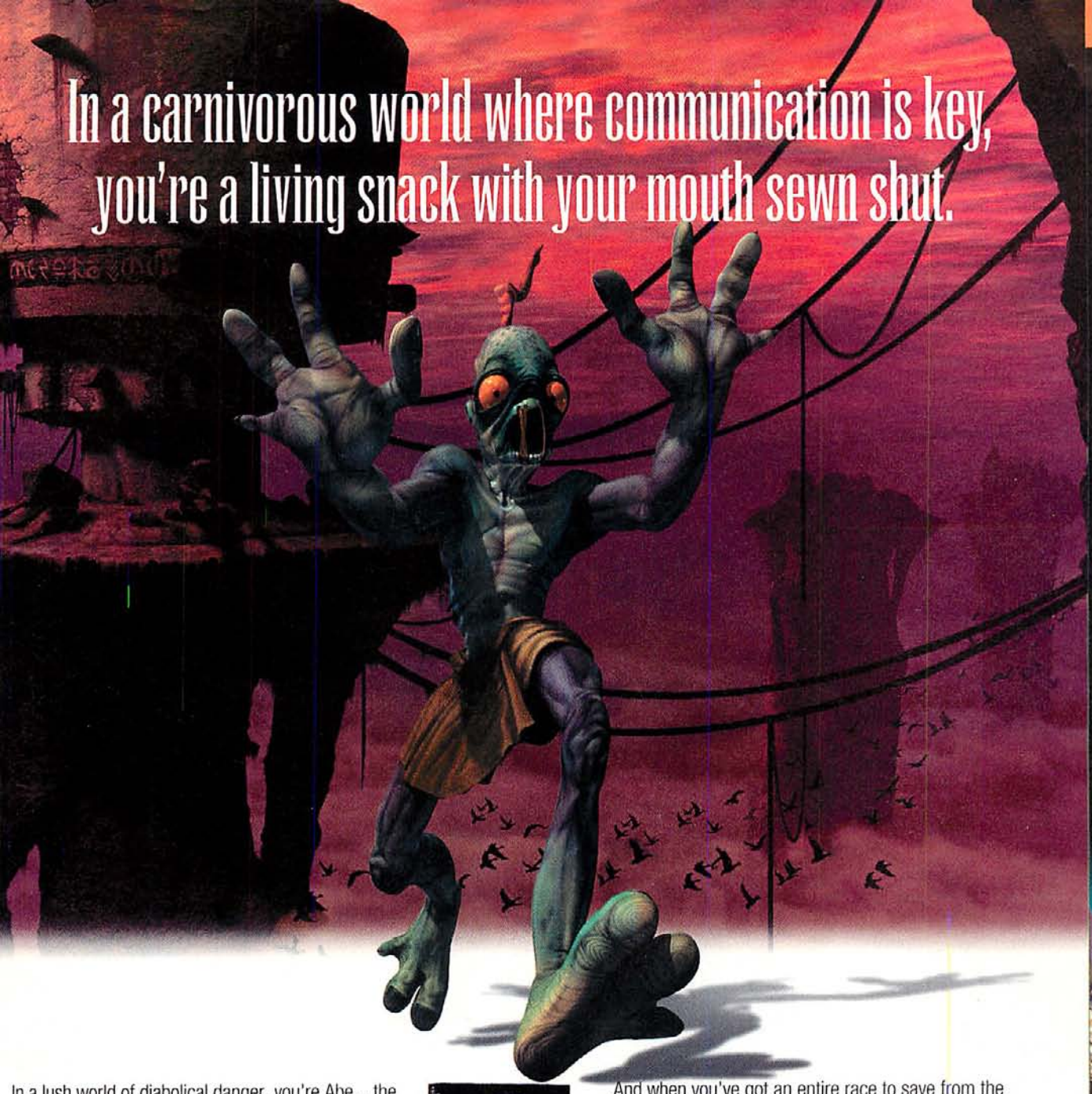


owww!



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In a carnivorous world where communication is key, you're a living snack with your mouth sewn shut.



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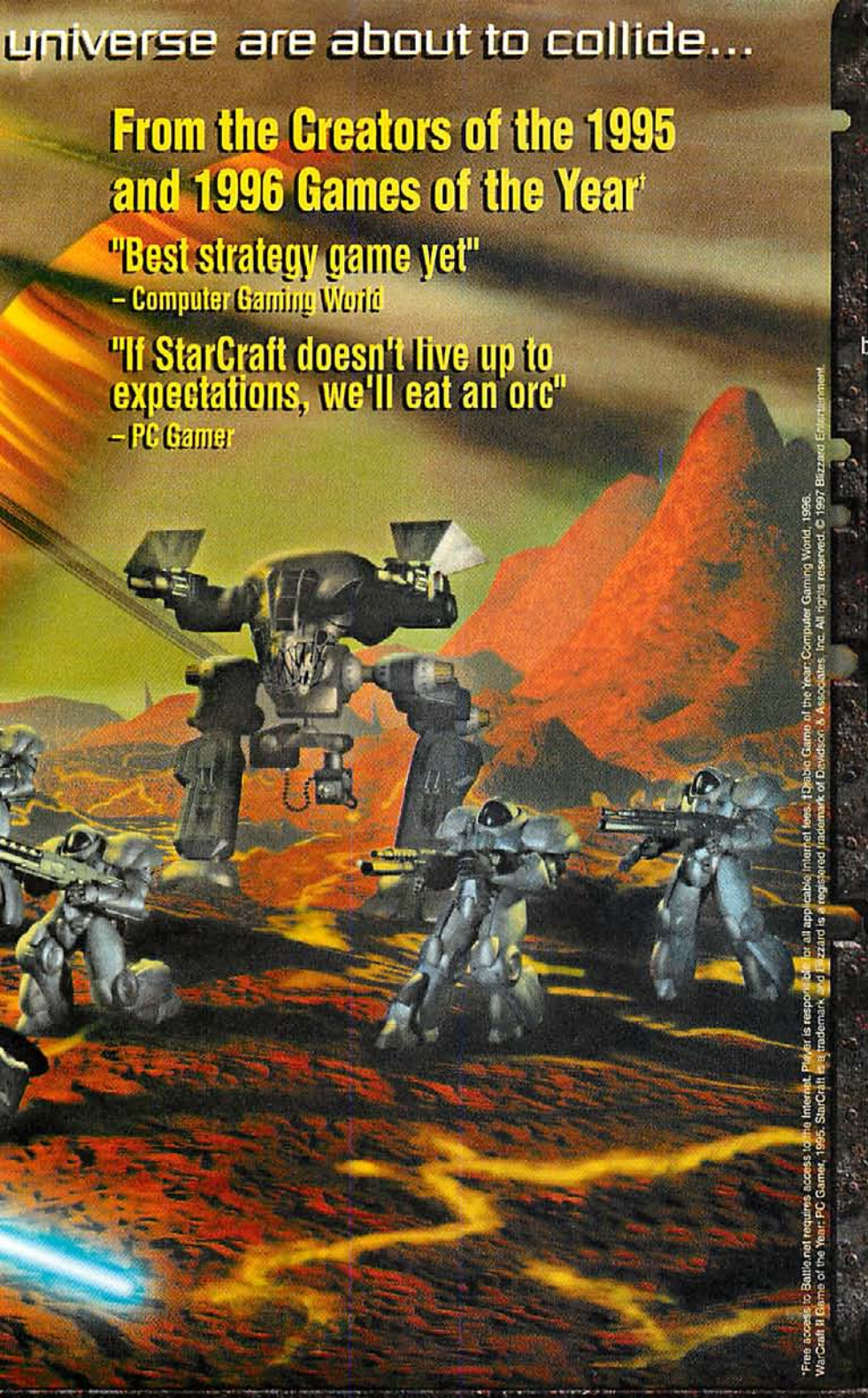
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– Computer Gaming World

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #266


INTENSE
3D
Voodoo
LAP TIME 1/3
00'35"44
BEST LAP
00'35"65
TIME
32
16
CHECKPOINT

Now Get Arcade Thrills from a PC Graphics Card!

Putting an Intense 3D Voodoo graphics card in your PC is like getting a coin-op 3D game arcade. With 3Dfx Interactive's Voodoo Rush technology, Intense 3D Voodoo delivers everything you want in a game card...super 3D acceleration, 2D acceleration, DVD support, NTSC and PAL output to television...and more!

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Don't miss the arcade fun. Buy Intense 3D Voodoo now from your local computer retailer!

These games included:



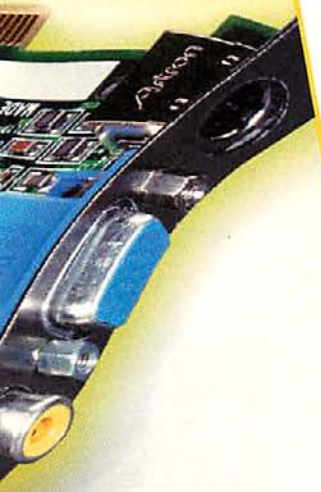
Moto Racer

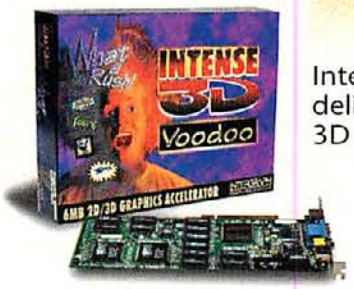


Turok: Dinosaur Hunter



Longbow FX





Intense 3D Voodoo delivers arcade-quality 3D graphics on *your* PC.

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Windows® 95 CD-ROM

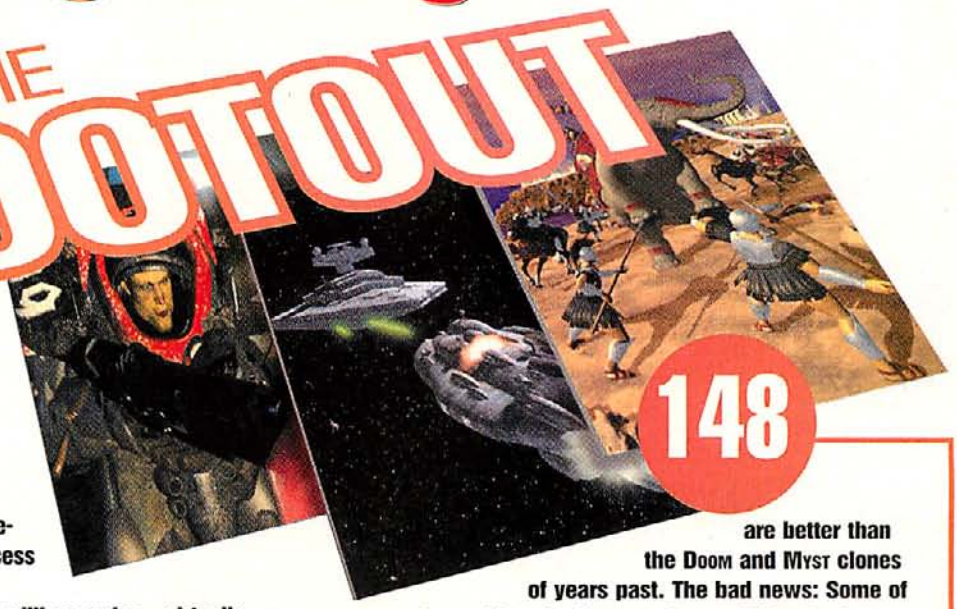
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COVER STORY

REAL-TIME SHOOTOUT



We Rank 40 Real-Time Strategy Games

Real-time strategy is the hottest category in gaming. Spurred by the success of WarCraft II and Command & Conquer—which each sold over one million copies—virtually every major game company is racing to release the next RT hit. As a result, the biggest clone war to hit the PC is about to be waged this Christmas. The good news: Most of the games

148

are better than the Doom and Myst clones of years past. The bad news: Some of them still suck. Strategy Games Editor (and WarCraft II pro) Elliott Chin played and ranked them so you'll spend less time mulling and more time mauling. At 30 pages, this is our biggest single-genre feature ever!

FEATURES

3D Graphics Cards Tested

214 We get more questions about 3D graphics cards than anything else. For the past several weeks, our technical gurus Loyd Case and Dave Salvator have been pounding on the latest 3D graphic accelerators, separating the super-fast from the slugs. You'll see their ratings and recommendations, as well as an overview on Intel's new AGP architecture.



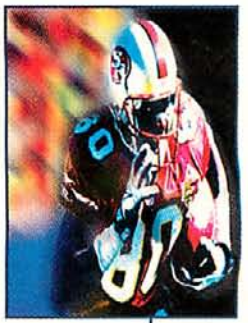
Online Gaming Overview

234 We know there are problems with online gaming, but we're not here to be cheerleaders. Getting online games up and running can be a hassle, and there are still issues with cost and latency that have yet to be worked out. Despite this, there are hundreds of games and thousands of players out there eager to take you on. Features Editor Denny Atkin surveys what's available, how to get into it, and whether it's even worth your time.



PC Sports Special Section

337 Many computer sports fans secretly envy their console cousins' action-oriented sports fare. But this should be the year when PC games finally catch up, combining high-octane 3D action with the depth that computer sports games traditionally provide. Manager Jeff Green and his experienced bullpen of writers scout the world of computer sports to find this year's winners and losers. Adjust your visor, pop open a cold one, and read on.



SNEAK PREVIEWS

76 AH-64D Longbow 2
84 Battlezone
92 The Curse of Monkey Island
98 Lords of Magic
101 NBA Live 98
104 Joint Strike Fighter
112 Sub Culture



HARDWARE

260 Cyrix 6x86MX Processor
262 MS Force-Feedback Joystick
264 CDS-5000 Driving Controller
264 SAS MS-5 Bazooka Subwoofer
266 Hitachi Superscan Elite 751
268 Eminent Technology LFT-11
272 Sim-Tech Commander



GAMER'S EDGE

394 Dungeon Keeper
402 iF-22 Flight Tactics
408 Warlords III
412 X-COM: Apocalypse
419 Extreme Assault
424 CG Tips!



COLUMNS

257 Lloyd Case — **Performance Tuning Tips**
331 Scorpia — **The Roberta Williams Collection**
335 Dennis McCauley — **This Season's Baseball Sims**
381 Charles Ardai — **Women Characters**
383 Denny Atkin — **Building the Perfect Sim**
389 Terry Coleman — **GenCon Hits the Big 3-0**
446 Martin Cirulis — **What's the Deal...Political Incorrectness**

DEPARTMENTS

18 On the CG-ROM — **What's on the CD and How to Use It**
22 CG-Online — **Early Coverage on the Web**
27 Johnny Wilson — **Celebrating Gaming's Dark Side**
32 Letters — **Our Readers Speak Out**
42 READ.ME — **News, Views, and the Latest Releases**
442 Top 100 — **Readers Rate the Top Games**
444 Hall of Fame — **Greatest Games of All Time**
445 Coming Next Month — **A Preview of the December *CGW***

REVIEWS

ADVENTURE/ROLE-PLAYING

278 Twinsen's Odyssey
282 Atlantis
286 Betrayal In Antara
290 Versailles

ACTION

293 Atomic Bomberman
298 Moto Racer
300 Blood: Cryptic Passage

SPORTS

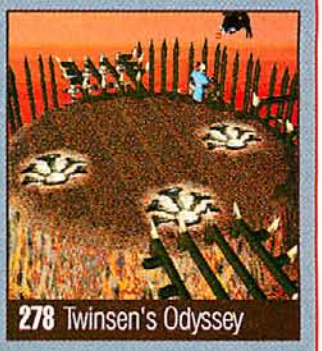
306 Links LS '98
308 Tennis Elbow
312 Baseball Mogul

CLASSIC/PUZZLES

314 Creatures
316 Microsoft Entertainment Pack: Puzzle Collection
318 Gubble

STRATEGY/WARGAMES

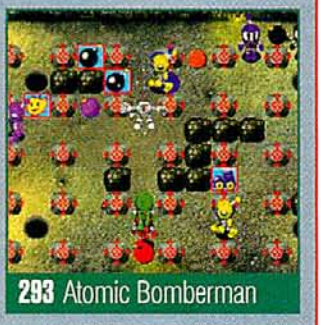
320 Pacific General
324 Dark Colony
328 Dragon Dice



278 Twinsen's Odyssey



290 Versailles



293 Atomic Bomberman



306 Links LS '98

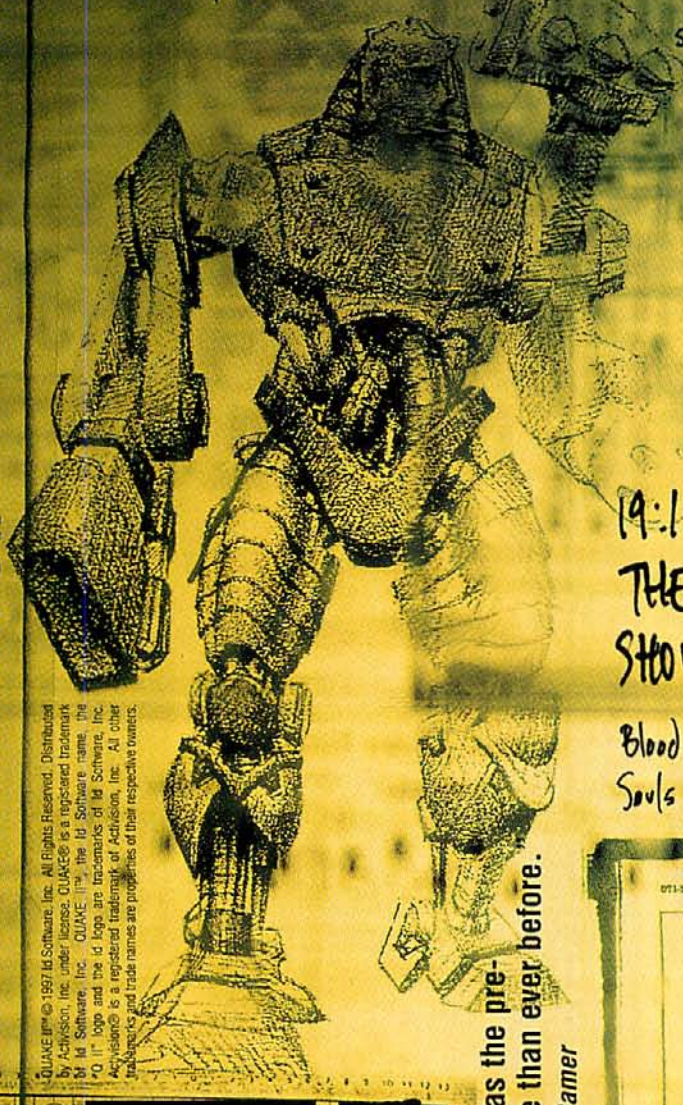


314 Creatures



320 Pacific General

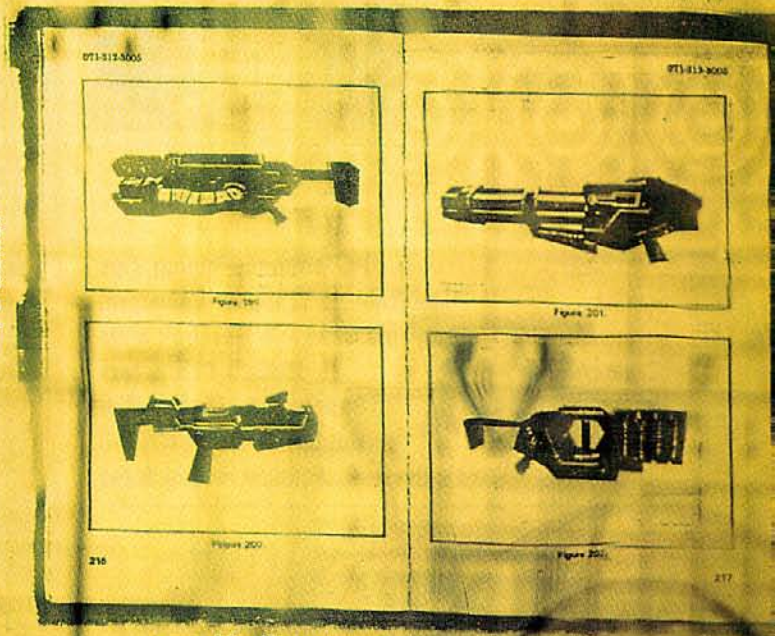
19:42 You learn the hard way in the outer sectors... Like never get into a drinking match with a three-headed Bukan. Never assume a Strogg is dead even when he's nothing but bloody scraps of shrapnel. And never go to bed with a Rabaul no matter how many breasts she has.



19:11

THE LINE BETWEEN MAN AND MACHINE SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ERASED.

Blood vessels and wires should never have been crossed. Souls and circuitry, brain stems and processors.



"Quake II will establish id as the pre-eminent blastmasters more than ever before."
—PC Gamer

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LINE NO.		EVALUATION
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3	Intense environments	Man gun turrets. Blow up subways. Smash glass. Toss grenades with perfect control. Duck to evade hits. Give them Hell.

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U.S. MARINE CORPS 25-METER ZEROING PROCEDURES

U.S. MARINE CORPS TARGET


18:03 Grotesque images of Strogg have been filling my sleep at night. Their metallic spines jutting awkwardly through muscle, skin and connective tissue, masks of human facial skin smeared and bonded to their cyber-alloy heads, crude but powerful weapons jammed into oozing, gaping sockets. Thank God the endless sleep ahead is dreamless.
17:05 It's either us or them this time. We lose, and we all end up bratwurst in the grill of some unholy mechanized carnivore. We win, and the human Coalition of Men can start rebuilding the cities on Mars, Olympus, even Earth. Who knows - they might even get the old intergalactic football league going again. God, I miss Monday Night Football.
"Quake II, without a doubt, the game of E3." 39
— Computer Gaming World
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ENSEMBLE STUDIOS

ZONE

TEEN T ESRB

GAMEPEN'S BEST OF E3 AWARD

"Best real-time strategy game."

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their glorious empire.

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Where do you want to go today?



to amass great riches, or ballistics and naval warfare to strike fear into the hearts of others.



Multi-player capabilities, 40 pre-set scenarios, lavish campaigns, randomly generated maps, and an expansive scenario editor make it a new challenge each time you play. Add in the rich 3-D graphics where you'll see every flaming arrow, marching phalanx, and charging war elephant, and the pressure to win becomes downright intense.



But before you think you've got what it takes to win, make sure you've got the empire to back it up.

"Microsoft heads right to the top of the real-time strategy class with Age of Empires..."
—Computer Games Strategy Plus, June 1997

AGE of EMPIRES

Choose your favorite form of world domination.

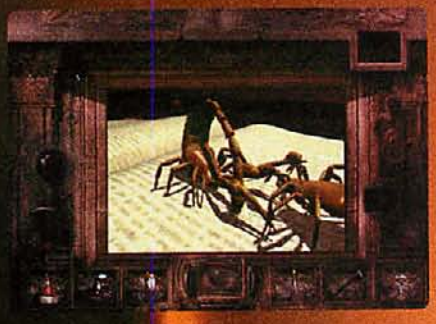
www.microsoft.com/games/empires

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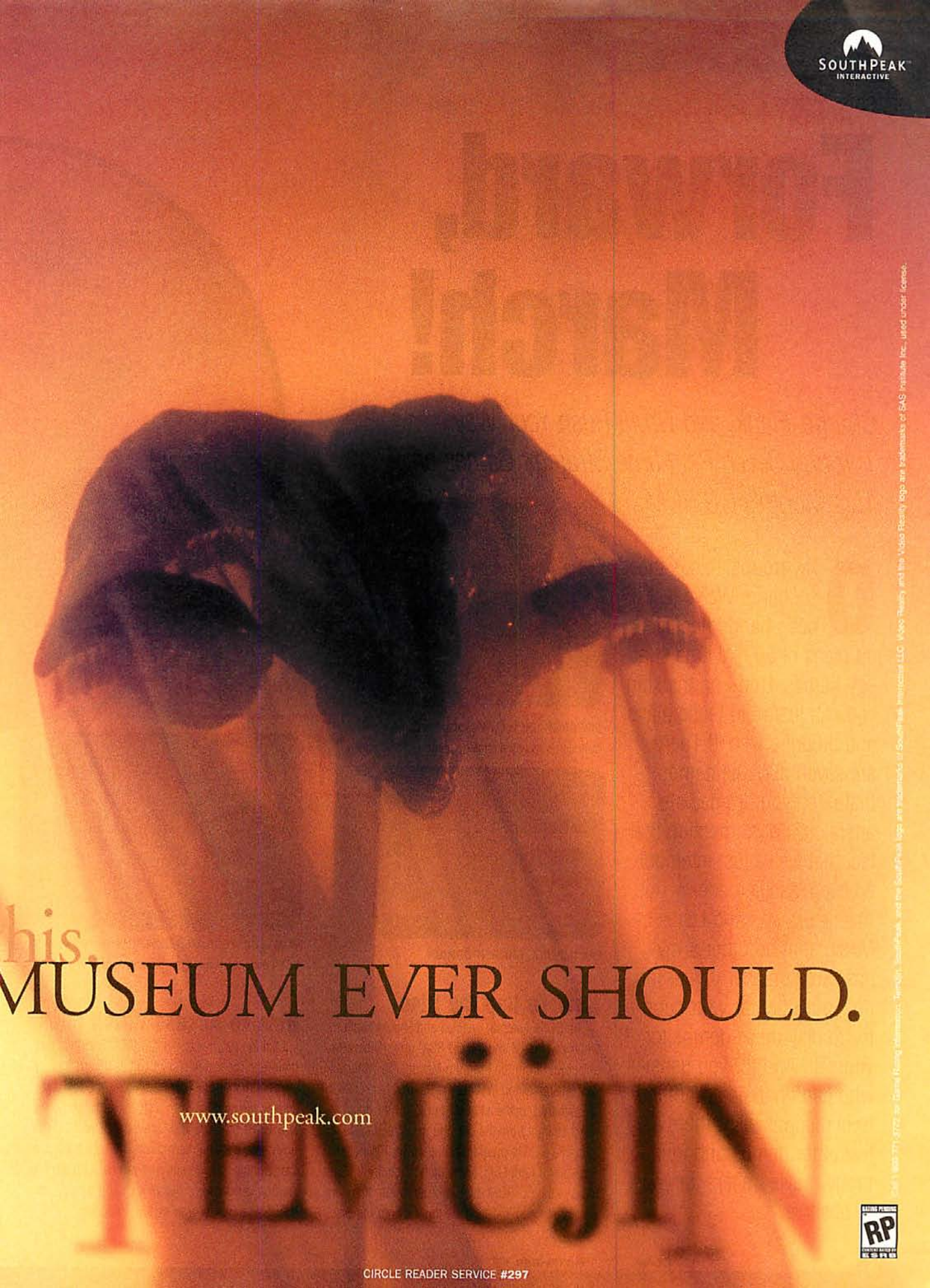


no museum has ever unveiled an exhibit like NO

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #297

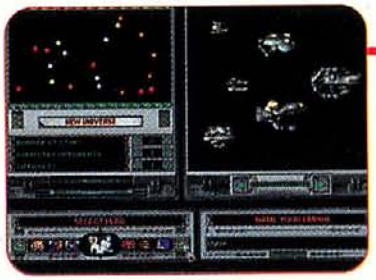
Forward, March!

Charge, Flank, and Grunt-Rush Your Way Through Seven Real-time Strategy Games on This Month's CG-ROM.

Okay troops, this is the scenario: We've just been handed detailed op plans of 50 real-time strategy games. Don't go thinking you can just read these plans and be done with it! There are seven playable demos that need your immediate attention, not to mention the fact that we've just intercepted two classified enemy ops, AGE OF EMPIRES and LORDS OF MAGIC, that no other army has. So, consider it your job, no, your duty for your country, to play these demos for yourself. And for you pansies who can't handle command-level responsibility, there are five other demos and four pretty movie trailers for you to observe.



AGE OF EMPIRES: *CGW*'s exclusive demo of Microsoft's real-time strategy game.



PAX IMPERIA: EMINENT DOMAIN



WAR WIND II: HUMAN ONSLAUGHT: The sequel to SSI's underrated real-time strategy game.

How To Use the Disc

The CD is Autoplay enabled and should begin when you load it into the CD-ROM drive. Otherwise, select Run from the Program Manager in Windows 3.x, or Start Menu in Windows 95, and type D:\RUNME (where D is the letter of your CD-ROM drive) to run it straight from the CD. You may type D:\INSTALL to create a *CGW* program group on your Windows desktop for future fun. Many demos require the disc to be in the CD-ROM drive in order to run; therefore, we recommend installing the demos from our disc.

How to Access Patch Files

Click on Patches under the *CGW* Features, and then read the text window that has instructions on copying the files to your hard drive. You can also access the patches from a DOS prompt by typing D:\PATCHES (where D: is the letter of your CD-ROM drive) and copying them directly to your hard drive. We strongly recommend that you back up any previously saved games before installing a patch, as this may overwrite your existing program.





EARTH 2140: Interplay's foray into the real-time strategy arena.



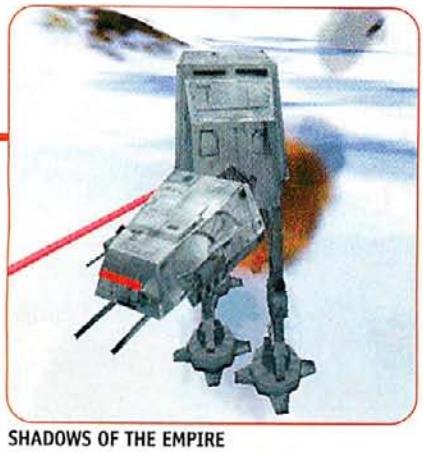
7TH LEGION



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WARBIRDS 2.0



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NOVEMBER CG-ROM TITLES

TITLE	PLATFORM	DIRECTORY	EXECUTABLE
7th Legion	95 only	LEGION	legion.exe
Age of Empires	NT/95	AGE	msaoedx.exe
Aliens Online	win/95	ALIENSDEMO	alien.exe
Azaria	95 only	AZARIA	setup.exe
Conquest Earth	win/95	CONQUEST	aliengam.avi
Earth 2140	95 only	EARTH2140	earth.exe.
Earth 2140	DOS only	EARTH2140	2140.exe
Half-Life	95 only	HALFLIFE	half.avi
Lords of Magic	95 only	LORDS	set.up
NetStorm	95 only	NETSTORM	setup.exe
Pax Imperia 2	95 only	PAX	setup.exe
Shadows of the Empire	95 only	SHADOWS	sote.exe
Spaceward Ho! IV	95 only	SPACEWARD	setup.exe
StarCraft	95 only	STARCRAFT	starcraf.exe
Take No Prisoners	95 only	TNP	setup.exe
Total Annihilation	win/95	WEB	unitview.exe
Virtual Springfield (Simpsons)	95 only	VSDEMO	vssmall.mov
War Wind II	95 only	WARWINDII	setup.exe
WarBirds 2.0	95 only	WB2DEMO	wb2demo.exe


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CAPCOM

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CGW's Home on the Web

If you're looking for the fastest news and reviews in gaming, turn to the experts at **GameSpot**.



Ziff-Davis has combined the talent and expertise of *Computer Gaming World*, *GameSpot*, and *ZDNet* to bring you the best gaming resources on the Web. Whether it's the latest game demos, breaking reviews, detailed strategy articles, hot scoops, or online forums, you'll find everything you need to stay on the cutting edge.

If you're looking for the earliest news and reviews in gaming, turn to the experts at *GameSpot*. Here's a brief overview of what you can expect on *GameSpot* over the next few weeks. To see these articles and others, point your browser to the ultimate gaming page at **http://cgw.gamespot.com/november**.



Designer Diaries

Ever wonder what's going on behind the scenes while those much-anticipated games are in development? *GameSpot*'s Designer Diaries take you inside Activision's DARK REIGN and ZORK GRAND INQUISITOR, ION Storm's ANACHRONOX, Sierra's QUEST FOR GLORY: DRAGON FIRE, Accolade's JACK NICKLAUS GOLF 5, and more!

Strategy Guides

GameSpot strategy guides are unofficial game handbooks, stocked with secrets and step-by-step instructions on how to defeat each level. Our strategy guides unlock those untapped hours of gameplay to help you get more fun for your buck. Here are four recent examples:

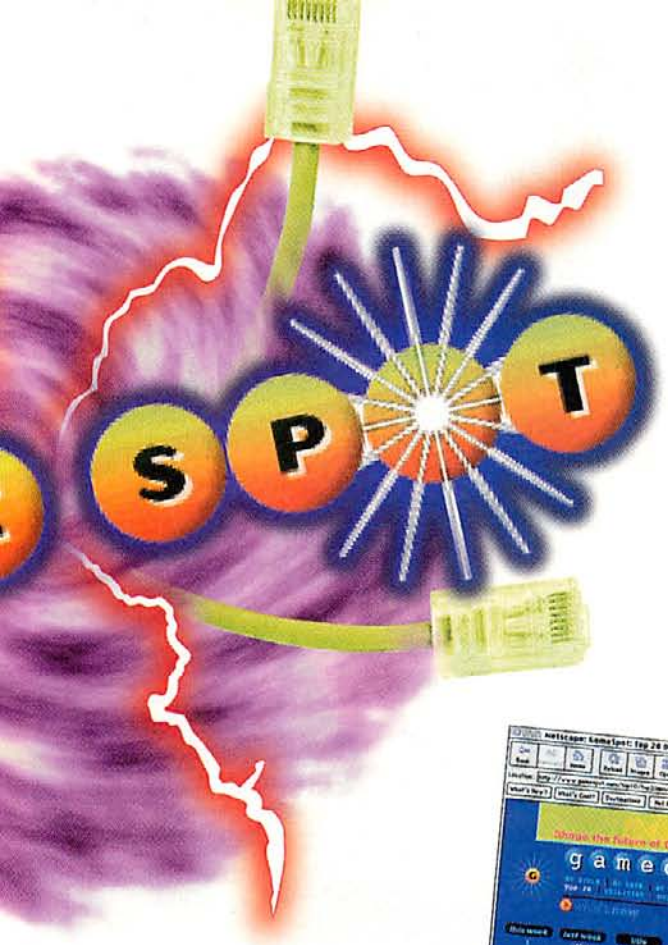
Starfleet Academy Do you have what it takes to be a Starfleet Officer and command a starship of your very own? You'll have to graduate from the Academy first, and *GameSpot*'s strategy guide will guide you through your matriculation.

X-COM: Apocalypse With a little help from *GameSpot*, you'll have no problem crushing the alien invasion, in this long-awaited third installment to the popular X-COM series.

Betrayal in Antara Having trouble solving the mystery in Antara? *GameSpot* has information to get you through the toughest parts of the game and some general hints and tips to make your adventure run a little more smoothly.



Dungeon Keeper The definitive guide to the hugely popular Bullfrog game is available on *GameSpot*. You'll find thorough information about each room, the minions, the heroes, and more!



As you read through your issue of *CGW* each month, watch for the CG Online bug, which points to a related online article at **www.computergaming.com**. If you're interested in taking part in our discussions about gaming, check out the *CGW* Forums on ZDNet at **www.zdnet.com** or **www.chatnow.com**. *CGW* reviewer and columnist Dennis McCauley and *CGW* Sysop Arlan Levitan host ongoing discussions on ZD Net's Community Center.

Demos

GameSpot has the most thorough and regularly updated game demo libraries on the Web. You'll find corresponding demos for some of the games reviewed in this issue, including TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY, BETRAYAL IN ANTARA, ATOMIC BOMBERMAN, BASEBALL MOGUL, TENNIS ELBOW, MICROSOFT PUZZLE PACK, GUBBLE, PACIFIC GENERAL, OUTPOST 2, and more.



Computer Gaming World

Turn to *CGW* Online for news, reviews, strategy articles, and behind-the-scenes features on hundreds of top computer games. Because of our joint venture with *GameSpot*, you'll also see some articles posted online before they're in print! In addition, be sure to watch out for a major new hardware section by Loyd Case, entitled the Ultimate Game Machine, a joint venture from *CGW* and *GameSpot*.



Highlights this month include our exclusive real-audio interview with Dave Kaemmer, designer of GRAND PRIX LEGENDS, Papyrus' latest racing game, scheduled to ship early next year. Kaemmer, a NASCAR RACING and INDYCAR RACING designer, talks about track selection, working with classic engines and rigid body physics, and discusses his experience talking to *actual* old Grand Prix mechanics in preparation for this game.

You'll also want to check out the Web site for extended coverage and additional screenshots of NBA Live '98 (see Sneak Preview, this issue). So, if you haven't done so already, be sure to add **www.computergaming.com** to your bookmark collection.

Special Features

The Most Influential People in Computer Gaming Many people have been around the computer game industry for a while, but few have had as much of an impact as these legends. The editors at *Computer Gaming World* and *GameSpot* selected the Fifteen Most Influential People in Computer Gaming of All Time, and, to kick off an annual event, the Five Most Influential People of 1996.



DirectX 5.0: Into the Breach Microsoft promised that the advent of Windows 95 and DirectX would be Nirvana for game developers. But DirectX has proven to be paradise for neither developers nor gamers. What will the next version, DirectX 5.0, bring, and will it fulfill Microsoft's promise of making life easier for computer gamers?

The ULTIMA Legacy: Past and Future As the online gaming community awaits the final arrival of ULTIMA ONLINE, *GameSpot* takes a retrospective look at this ever-popular series. *GameSpot* editors caught up with ULTIMA's creator, Lord British (Richard Garriott), as he recounted the entire history of the series.



DARK REIGN Feature Preview After reviewing the host of products covered in this month's real-time strategy round-up, be sure check out *GameSpot* for in-depth coverage of one title that seems to rise above the fray. It's Activision's DARK REIGN and *GameSpot* has the full story. Also check out the Dark Reign Designer Diary by producer Greg Borrud.

QUAKE II Feature Preview Will the next blockbuster title from id live up to the high expectations surrounding it? GameSpot flew down to Texas to take a look. Check out what we think and what we saw.



Goodness, look at the size of his...

hands.

TI 1
mA 210
KV 120
SL 3
GT -23
ZO 3.9
CE 0
-111
AH 7541

CLASSIFIED

MATURE M AGES 17+

VALVE

SIERRA





HE WOULD HAVE GRADUATED FIRST IN HIS CLASS FROM THE ACADEMY, EXCEPT HE ATE THE DRILL SERGEANT.



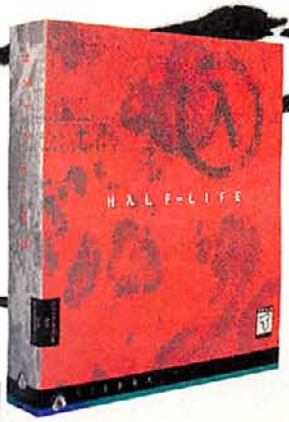
YUM

HE'S AN ALIEN WHO CAN THINK. AND HE THINKS HE'D LIKE TO LIVE, WHICH PRETTY MUCH MEANS KILLING YOU. WHAT'S WORSE, HE COMMUNICATES WITH HIS BUDDIES WHO'LL WORK TOGETHER TO HUNT YOU DOWN. OH, AND THEY NOT ONLY SEE YOU, BUT ALSO HEAR AND SMELL YOU. BUT DON'T WORRY, YOU STILL HAVE YOUR BRAIN - AND SOME POWERFUL, NEW WEAPONS ON YOUR SIDE. WELL, AT LEAST WHILE YOUR HEAD'S STILL ATTACHED. AS IF BATTLING SMART ALIENS WHO USE THEIR SENSES ISN'T ENOUGH, HALF-LIFE LETS YOU FIGHT UP TO 31 OPPONENTS ON-LINE. SMOOTH SKELETAL ANIMATION AND 16-BIT COLOR MAKE THE WORLD REAL. ADD A 3-D CARD AND YOU'LL FEEL EACH BLOW. PLAY HALF-LIFE. BECAUSE IT'S MUCH MORE SATISFYING TO WASTE AN ENEMY WHO DOESN'T WANT TO DIE. BUT DON'T TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT, KILL ONE FOR YOURSELF AT www.sierra.com/half-life



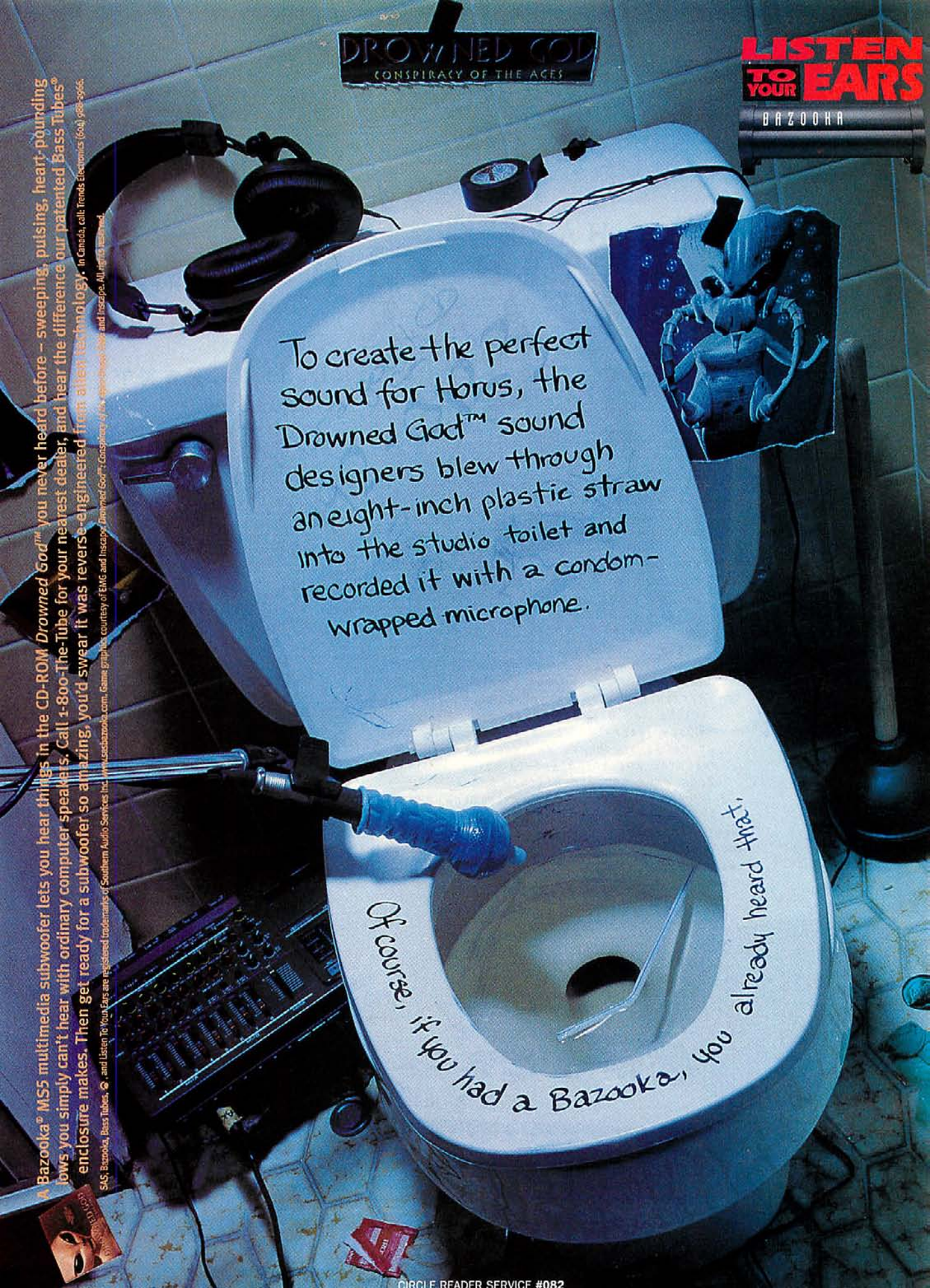


HALF-LIFE



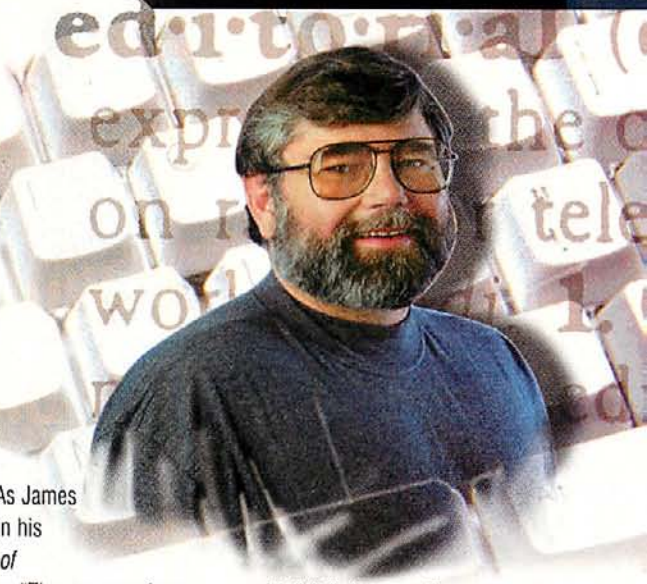
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #156



CIRCLE READER SERVICE #082

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Byte



Why Computer Gamers Like the Dark Side

"Is it really healthy to have games filled with monsters, violence, and gore?" Family, friends, acquaintances, and members of the general media have asked me that question on numerous occasions during my 15 years of covering games. The corollary question is often, "Why do there have to be so many negative images in games?" The simple answer, for those with no patience for my philosophical/psychological perambulations, is that there must be evil in order to allow for the heroic. Positives demand negatives and vice versa.

The deeper answer is that we need fear in our lives. Greek civilization used the word *phobeo* ("I flee") to express the basic reaction to fear or terror—I run. I run because of a perceived threat to my continued existence. I run because of biological reactions (adrenaline flow, rapid pulse rate, tensed muscles) that propel me toward action. Yet the Greeks also recognized that by overcoming fear, we become masters over our circumstances. Phobos, the god of fear, was often listed as the second god in the pantheon after Zeus. Alexander and Theseus both sacrificed to Phobos in order to pave the way for conquest. Sparta was dominated by a temple dedicated to Phobos. Aristotle believed that we must learn from fear.

Why is fear important? Why are we likely to jump (nearly) out of our chair in surprise when a Shambler leaps out at us in QUAKE, scattering our onscreen characters in every direction? Why do we relish the feeling that something is not right in GABRIEL KNIGHT 2 as we explore Schloss Ritter or the crypt below the church? Why do we savor decapitating the zombies in NIGHTMARE CREATURES or leaving entrails on the ground in a host of mediocre first-person shooters? It is because, as psychologist William James told us in the last century, fear and ferocity are the flip sides of each other. Both are necessary impulses for survival. "We both fear, and wish to kill, anything that may kill us...." The first impulse represents self-preservation through flight while the second represents self-preservation through action. The truth is that while both are necessary for individual survival, opportunities for the latter are fewer and farther between. As James observed in his *Principles of Psychology*, "The progress from brute to man is characterized by nothing so much as by the decrease in frequency of proper occasions for fear."

> **"By overcoming fear, we become masters of our circumstances."**

So why do we like to experience fear or perpetrate ferocity in our gaming? It is largely because we have to practice in vicarious experience—through virtual combat and problem-solving—the skills that are instinctual to humanity but rarely given opportunity for expression. Gaming becomes a release for the ferocity within and satisfies the internal longing to practice self-preservation through both flight and ferocity.

But it's more than that. Fear is also the flip side of curiosity. Modern psychologists recognize that when fear drives the individual, curiosity and exploration are reduced. If fear is reduced, curiosity can dominate. Humans experience the fear of solitude, the fear of the unknown (related to both the threat of extinction and of solitude, as expressed in fears of dark places), and the fear of extinction. Such fear can both protect us from danger and shelter us from growth opportunities. Games with macabre themes; diabolical evil; eerie sounds; and dark, lonely environs give us an opportunity to move past the immobilizing fear that reduces curiosity and move into symbolic areas of growth and discovery. To be sure, the conquests and the victory over fear are ceremonial since they take place in fictional universes and only exist digitally in some silicon memory, but they form a pattern for problem-solving, pattern recognition, and resource management that can become a creative lifestyle.

Finally, computer games that include elements of the diabolical, monstrous, and horrific tend to affirm basic virtues. Stephen King, master teller of hair-raising tales, claims in *Danse Macabre* that horror stories reaffirm virtues by showing us what happens to people who venture into taboo lands. The stories of evil characters hoist by their own petards are as ubiquitous as a *Tales from the Crypt* episode. This idea of chaotic doings swinging back into balance is enhanced in computer games because the gamer's character is usually the instrument that the game's designer uses to redress the balance. It is learning by doing.

As with all philosophical discussions, this one probably proves little. Yet, if it helps to address some of the anxiety that parents, spouses, and friends have about negative characters, images, and deeds within computer games, it will have increased our understanding. Why do we need the "delightful fear" of a dark computer game? It keeps us alive—in more ways than one.

For a different perspective on the darker side of computer gaming, see Martin Cirulis' column this month on page 446.

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IF IT'S BATTLE YOU WANT IT'S BATTLE YOU'LL GET!

Features:

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- Solve baffling puzzles to advance between levels.
- Navigate 13 levels of intense action.
- Death Match battle for up to 8 players.*
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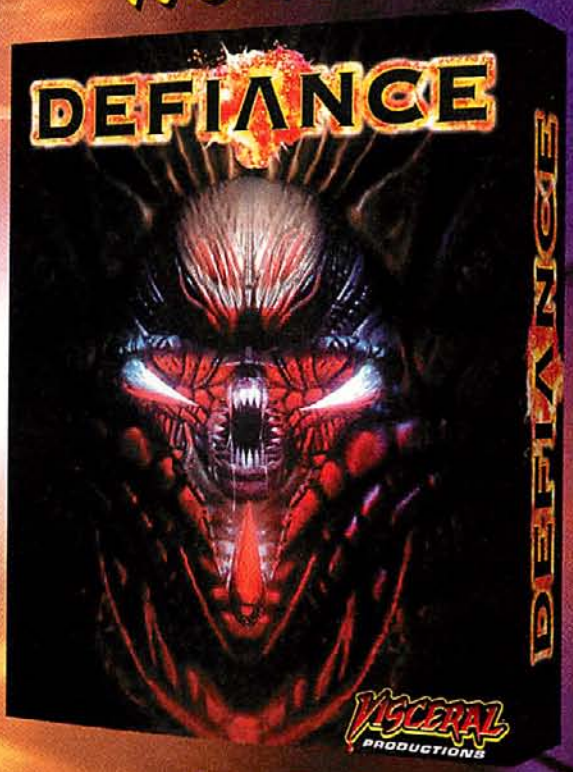
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"ACTION FANS TAKE NOTICE."
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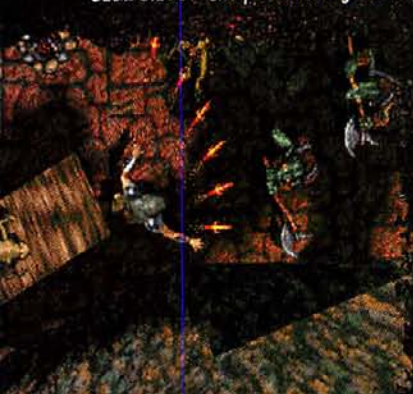
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Death would be too easy.

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Stoking your **powers**. Solving internal mysteries. Gathering **magic** and **arcane** knowledge.

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #281

NIGHT OF THE LIVING ARDAI

I just wanted to say how much I appreciated Charles Ardai's editorial on blood and mayhem in computer games and ads. I agree that there are exciting games that use violence effectively, but too many use it as a crutch. If there are parallels to the movies, I'd like to see lots more of *Slingblade* and much less of *Night of the Living Dead XXII* in the gaming industry.

Chris Weaver
from the Internet

Okay, as long as we don't have to review The English Patient *of the computer game industry. Here's another letter on the same subject.*

I've complained a couple times in the last year or so concerning what I perceive to be a serious sick and juvenile emphasis in ads in *Computer Gaming World*. I was told that these items were out of your control and I should contact the publisher, which I did.

Hoping that things wouldn't get too much worse, I recently wrote a check to renew my subscription, put it in an envelope, and set it out to be mailed. The September issue arrived today, and it didn't take long for the envelope to wind up in the garbage. The ads continue to get worse, from both disgusting and sexist perspectives. The final straw came when I saw the ad on page 189. If I wanted *Playboy*, I'd buy a *Playboy*. Yes, yes, I know it's out of your control. But unfortunately, that doesn't help me.

I then came to Charles Ardai's column on page 255. Way to go Charles! I wish more people in the industry took his perspective seriously. The envelope was fished out of the trash and is now lying on my desk, fate undecided. I love the magazine, but I hate supporting an industry that is quickly, in my opinion, headed for the sewers. I wish I could decide what to do; who knows how long that envelope will sit on my desk.

Jerry Foster
from the Internet

LETTER OF THE MONTH

CLASSIC PROSE/CLASSIC POSE

I was very interested in reading Mr. Chin's preview of DEATHTRAP DUNGEON in the September issue. It was up to the usual high standards of your magazine. But I do have a response to his comments on the female character's armor, or lack thereof. First, I grant that it is foolish to go into battle without the best armor available. At the same time, though, it seems that Eidos is following an artistic convention that goes from Classical Greece to the illustrations of Frazetta and Vallejo, of depicting the principal characters in heroic struggles as nudes. This allows the artist to show the intensity of the individual's struggles, as well as providing the context for depicting dynamic nudes. To judge by the screenshots on page 74, Eidos has succeeded in this so well that I plan to buy DD when I replace my old 486.

I realize that this argument would bear more weight if the male figure were similarly clad. On the other hand, it is probably difficult for a nude male to simultaneously convey sensitivity, caring, an openness to personal commitment, and spontaneous expressions of affection.

Tom Krider
from the Internet



Thanks for an interesting thought. Of course, assuming you're right, we can almost see the day that Eidos works out a deal so that gamers completing DEATHTRAP DUNGEON *would be eligible for college credit in Art Appreciation.*

FACT WRECKING

Just a quick note to point out that the picture of the Ferrari (on pg. 39 of your September issue) is not what it is stated to be. The caption identifies it as a 1987 Ferrari 328 GTS, when in fact it is actually a Ferrari Testarossa. The 328 is powered by a V8 with a displacement of 3.2 liters (hence 328). It also has a removable targa top (spider in Italian), hence the 'S' designation. The Testarossa is powered by a 5.0 liter V12 and has a fixed roof. The Testarossa's key identifying feature is the definitive side-strake pattern, which is plainly visible in your picture. Did he get a 328 or a Testarossa? HUGE difference.

Scott Varney
from the Internet

When we went to press, we remembered a picture of John's Ferrari from two years before that we had in our archives. We never thought about the possibility that John might own more than one Ferrari. So, we went to press with a story which correctly stated that Dennis Fong won the 328 and a picture which incorrectly displayed the Testarossa. Boy, are we embarrassed. We sure hope we never have multiple Ferraris so that someone makes the same mistake about our cars.

ULTIMATE GAME COMPLAINT

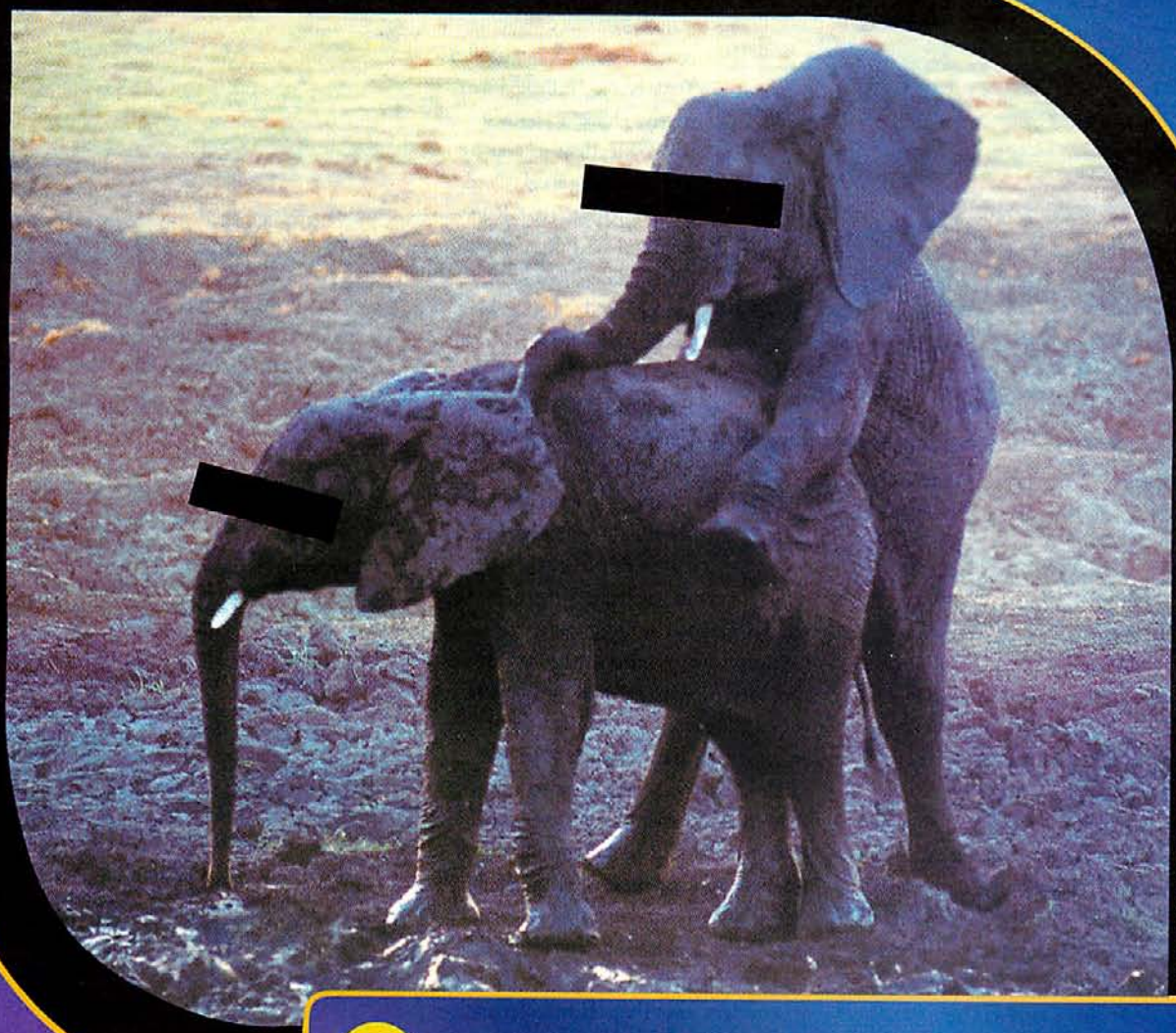
Correct me if I'm wrong. Falcon Northwest is the Porsche of Pentium machines, at $3,500-$5,500 a pop. Do you recognize that the vast majority of us do not "drive," so to speak, Porsches? My point is, why don't you guys have a list of, say, the Top 5 "Off The Shelf" or "Direct" Affordable Machines under $3,000? We already know you love the Voodoo chipset, and so do I, but only a few companies make it standard for their configuration. You guys occasionally sound like *Car & Driver* Porsche and Stingray fanatics with your emphasis on exotic hardware.

Don't get me wrong. It's good knowing the state of the art, but that term also implies an overview. Tell us about the duds, too. Are there lemon machines out there that every gamer should avoid? I'll bet there are.

Which computers are in your homes and which are in the office? Are there any new companies worth watching? Devote at least one issue per year to the consumer.

Ed McDonald
Smithville, NJ

Category: Screw The Republicans



Q: Who's the only former President whose personal life could be re-enacted on "Divorce Court™?"

A: THINK YOU KNOW THE ANSWER? CALL

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GAME #102

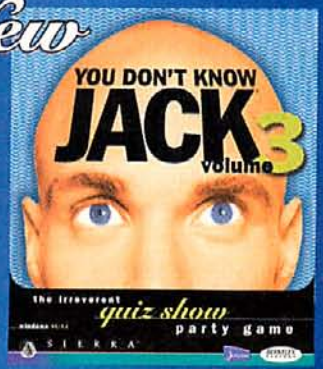
Dial that little number there, and we'll give you a peek at our latest addition, YOU DON'T KNOW JACK® Volume 3. No cheesy salespeople, no B.S. It's just a game.

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #111



Last year's CG Choice in the Ultimate Game Machine series won because of Bang for the Buck. Who'll win this year?

It's interesting that you should mention Car & Driver. *Ziff-Davis once published* Car & Driver *and* Stereo Review, *and* CGW *is often compared to those publications. In the* C&D *and* SR *days, we learned that even though most people can't afford the hottest new machines, that's what they want to read about first. Of course, both* C&D *and* SR *have their performance tests on "lesser" machines, as well. So, this year, we're going to do a complete feature in our Ultimate Game Machine series, using the same suite of benchmark tests, which will cover machines for under $2,500. Plus, we'll be doing one "money is no object" upgrade feature and one "bang for the buck" upgrade feature as part of the series. As for the duds, we know we cover them throughout the year. We hear from the manufacturers.*

As for what's in our homes and our offices, it might interest you to know that we live by our reviews when we're spending our money. Our editor-in-chief bought his home machine based on last year's survey and our features editor bought his laptop based on his research for last year's survey. Also, more Microns were purchased for our office this year than any other machine as a result of last year's testing results. We believe that we are a consumer book.

INDIANA JANES

I thoroughly enjoyed TOMB RAIDER as a game, but despite the strides that computer gaming has made in portraying female heroes, I hope that TOMB RAIDER doesn't have the effect of creating a heroine "stereotype." I paraphrase this from a local newspaper column written by a (female) journalist covering the current craze about Lara Croft in TOMB RAIDER. "In the end, she is merely a character who uses boys' toys and boys' solutions (i.e shoot everything in sight)," and she also said that "TOMB RAIDER is fun but Lara is for geeks only...who spend too much time in front of their computers." The journalist also cited an anecdote about how people would back Lara into a corner just to catch a glimpse of her, admittedly, bountiful assets.

Reading your recent article about the 10 worst trends seen at E3 (the Bimbo factor), I can't help but think that, unfortunately, the process has already started. You are right in saying that "the (heroines) we've seen so far aren't going to do anything to get our wives, girlfriends, or daughters interested in gaming." My two sisters' favorite games after all these years are PAC-MAN and TETRIS, despite our family's upgrading to a Pentium and my attempts to introduce them to other games. Won't it irritate them further when they see that game designers seem to think that "strong" women come in the shape of buxom, half-naked Indiana Janes? Real strength of character, I think, is much more than that. (Think of your mothers, guys!) The problem is, of course, how can you translate that into a game?

Alfred King
from the Internet

You've certainly touched on an intriguing issue. How can computer games display more than simple transactional interactions? Violence is easy to calculate and show on the screen. Influencing a character by nuances is not. Fortunately, the advances being made in artificial intelligence for games such as LANDS OF LORE, TRESPASSER: JURASSIC PARK, BLADE RUNNER, CLOSE COMBAT 2: A BRIDGE TOO FAR, *and the third* REBEL MOON *game will prepare the way for experiments in artificial*

Oops, We Goofed!

CGW extends its apologies to Gary Tarolli, whose name was misspelled as "Tavoli" in our list of the 5 Most Influential People of 1996 (Issue #159, pg. 56).

The #1 Computer Game Magazine
Computer Gaming World

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CyberDiversion Institute



WHERE THE CYBERDIVERSION INSTITUTE STANDS ON THE HEAT.NET 5-POINT PLAN.

On August 17, 1997, several members of the CyberDiversion Institute logged on to HEAT.NET. Here's what they found:

(RATINGS ARE FROM 1 TO 5 DOVES, 5 DOVES BEING EXCEPTIONAL)

POINT #1: Making Internet Gaming Easy.



After trying every internet game network, we found HEAT.NET had the easiest start-up: Log on to HEAT.NET, get the free HEAT software and play free, OR purchase the retail box (includes six months' premium membership, HEAT CD with games and internet access from MCI). HEAT.NET's simplified start-up process will jump-start world peace by allowing people to start diverting their aggressive urges away from reality immediately!

POINT #2: Creating The Fastest Internet Gaming Experience.

We found that HEAT.NET delivers the fastest, smoothest gameplay on the net. With the new millennium and the threat of Armageddon looming, the faster every human can purge their evil Reptilian Complex buildup, the better for all of us!

POINT #3: Making HEAT.NET Compatible With Nearly Every Multi-Player PC Game.

Nearly every aggression-intensive game out there can be played on HEAT.NET! We played some of our favorites, like Quake,™ WarCraft II™ and Scud: Industrial Evolution,™ as well as games designed exclusively for HEAT, like DeathDrome,™ Alien Race™ and Net Fighter,™ plus some intense HEAT-only Quake Mods. This wide range of Reptilian Complex outlets puts the power of peace into the hands of the masses!


Quake™


Scud: Industrial Evolution™

POINT #4: Rewarding Cyber-Aggression With Points And Prizes.



We found that HEAT is the ONLY internet game network where aggression is rewarded with frequent player points (they call Degrees) that can be redeemed for prizes. What an idea! If people play more often, they will quell aggressive urges more often and decrease real-life aggression more often. We believe HEAT.NET should win the Nobel Peace Prize for this point alone!

POINT #5: Creating Competition With Ladders And Events.

The ability to compete against the best players for prizes in automated, secure events and rise to the top creates an environment for Optimum Diversion Release (ODR), or the release of the most aggressive Reptilian urges, and the attainment of individual peace—which we believe will lead to a greater world peace!

Therefore, we, the CyberDiversion Institute, endorse HEAT.NET for its outstanding contribution in making the world safer for everyone. Please log on to HEAT.NET today and do your part for world peace!

D. G. Bartha

Officially endorsed by Dr. D.G. Bartha
The CyberDiversion Institute

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #267

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personality. Then, perhaps, we'll see games that go much deeper than shoot-'em-ups.

CURSE OF DIABLO



A friend of mine and I recently purchased a couple of copies of DIABLO, based mostly on *CGW*'s reviews, and we must agree that the gameplay is great. There is only one problem which is really starting to interfere with our agreement that it's worthy of game of the year. You see, my friend and I like to play games cooperatively. I think that saving your buddy's life when he is attacked from behind by a demon is more satisfying than merely blowing him away in a deathmatch.

Well, the problem, as you have probably guessed by now, is the method (or lack of such) of saving games in multiplayer. OK, we got used to the fact that when we die we lose everything in our hands and half our gold, and we even got used to the fact that the dungeon levels seem to regenerate after we clear them out. What is killing all our enthusiasm now is the fact that we completed our first quest (killed the Butcher), went back to town, and then quit the game to go get some dinner, and when we came back, the Butcher was alive all over again! Does Blizzard expect us to complete all the quests in one sitting?!?!

I find it quite frustrating, not only that the save game is implemented so poorly, but that there is nothing in the documentation anywhere to warn us of regenerating quest monsters. Anyway, I am not writing you just in order to gripe. Maybe you can help us. Do you know what causes subsequent quests to be granted to us? Twice, so far, we have had both the Butcher quest and the Leoric quest (so it seems the completion of one is not a prerequisite for the granting of the next), but now we can't get the latter back. If you could tell us that we don't have to re-solve every quest in order to go on with the game, and give us a hint as to how to proceed, it would help keep us from giving up on what otherwise seems like a great game.

Eric Hill
from the Internet

The four multiplayer quests are always present. Just go to the appropriate level and the Butcher, Leoric, Lazarus, and Diablo are always there and ready for fresh meat. As for the save implementation, this was a design decision related to play-balance. A cooperative scenario should be designed differently than a deathmatch scenario or a solitaire scenario. Playing DIABLO cooperatively throws off the play-balance. Making it possible to have saves which allow you to pick up where you left off would throw it off even more.

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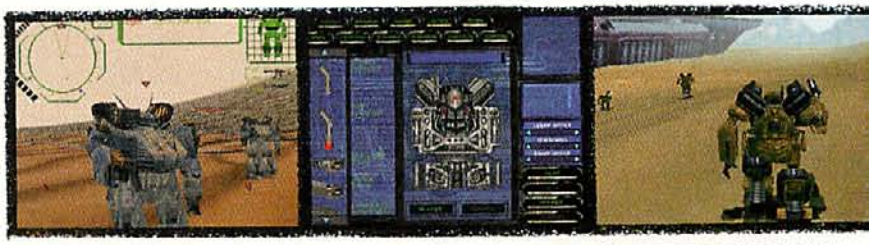
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #143

Edited by Charlotte Panther (CPanther@zd.com)

Dancing With the Dead

LucasArts Begins a Grim Hunt for Its Next Adventure Game

Of all the stars in the adventure gaming industry, Tim Schafer is one of the hottest, with some of the funniest and most clever adventure games to his credit. Among his many design and co-programming credits are: MANIAC MANSION, DAY OF THE TENTACLE, MONKEY ISLAND 1 and 2, and, most recently, FULL THROTTLE. What each of these games had going for it was a hilarious sense of humor, a well-written plot, and great gameplay (the superb art of Peter Chan didn't hurt either).

Now, Schafer is bringing these same qualities to his next adventure game: GRIM FANDANGO. Announced at ECTS in London, GRIM FANDANGO is set for a Fall 1998 release. Tim Schafer lightly sums it up as "a little *Nightmare Before Christmas* and a little *Chinatown*." Set in the Land of the Dead, you play a skeleton, Manuel "Manny" Calavera, in a film noir-like adventure game told in four acts, spanning four years.



In the first act, Manny is a travel agent at the Dept. of Death, selling boat and train tickets to dead souls who don't want to spend their four-year journey walking or swimming. In the second act, after discovering a ring of corruption in Act One, Manny jumps ship, literally, becoming the captain of an ocean liner. In the third act, he is stuck in an underwater prison mine at the end of the world. Finally, the two-part fourth act sees Manny traveling to a snow-covered Mayan temple, and then back to the first city. Tagging along throughout the game is your buddy Glottis, an elemental spirit summoned from the earth to be Manny's driver and mechanic. Through the four acts, the two develop a rare friendship and bond.

> **"The four-year journey through the Land of the Dead screamed adventure game to me."**
>
> *—Tim Schafer*



GRIM FANDANGO has a very stylized look, brought to life by Peter Chan's artwork. However, unlike LucasArts' previous adventure games (and its upcoming title, CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND), GRIM FANDANGO will have pre-rendered, computer-drawn 2D backgrounds and real-time 3D characters. Going into the project, Schafer knew that 3D had certain limitations. That was one reason why he chose a simplistic art form for GRIM FANDANGO's look.

Says Schafer, "Mexican folk art has primitive depictions of skeletons, and it would be great to see them come to life. I thought it was the kind of thing that would look really good in 3D, unlike a realistic human figure with the low poly count that you are sometimes restricted to. Realistic art usually just doesn't look that good.

▸▸▸Continued on pg 56



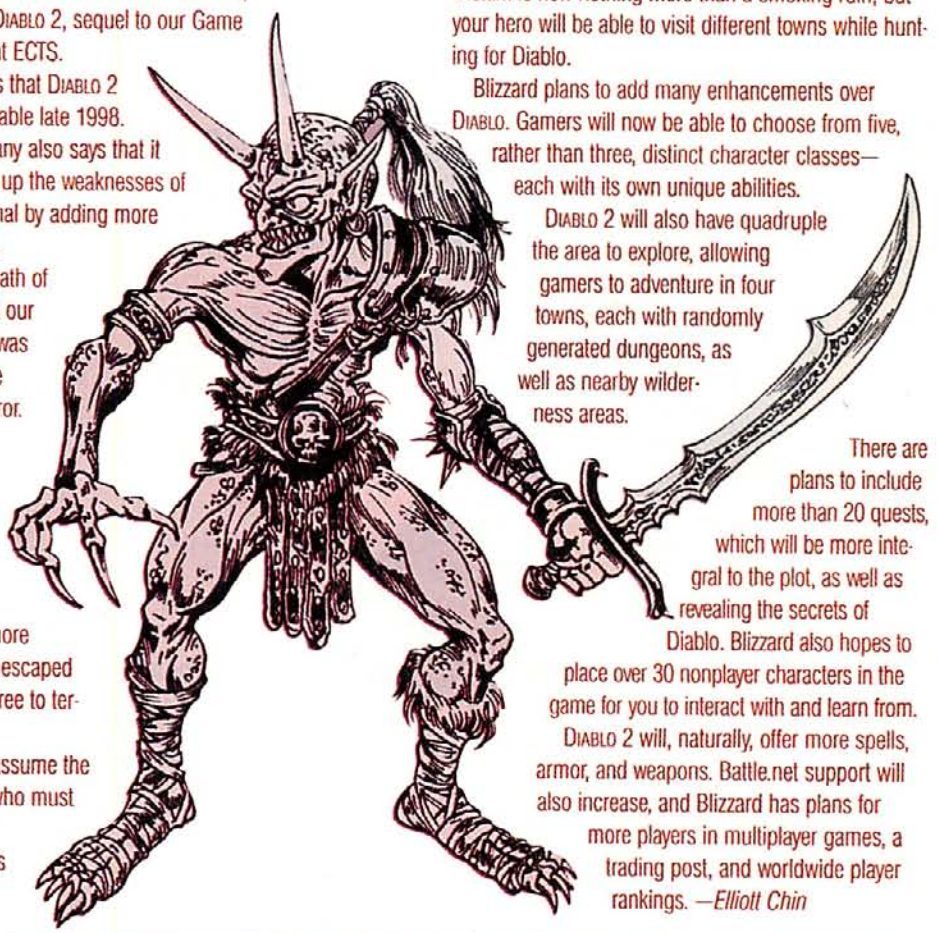
DIA DE LOS MUERTOS The Mexican Day of the Dead festival was Schafer's inspiration for GRIM FANDANGO.

Diablo 2 Announced at ECTS in London

At last, Blizzard has confirmed the inevitable, announcing DIABLO 2, sequel to our Game of the Year, at ECTS. Blizzard says that DIABLO 2 will be available late 1998. The company also says that it will shore up the weaknesses of the original by adding more depth and role-playing.

Following the aftermath of DIABLO, it turns out that our hero from the original was too weak to contain the spirit of the Lord of Terror. Now, Diablo has consumed the soul of the hero and added his (or her) power to his own. This does not bode well for Tristam because Diablo, now more powerful than ever, has escaped the underworld and is free to terrorize the earth.

In DIABLO 2, players assume the identity of a new hero who must follow Diablo's wake of destruction and stop his renewed bid for power.



Tristam is now nothing more than a smoking ruin, but your hero will be able to visit different towns while hunting for Diablo.

Blizzard plans to add many enhancements over DIABLO. Gamers will now be able to choose from five, rather than three, distinct character classes—each with its own unique abilities.

DIABLO 2 will also have quadruple the area to explore, allowing gamers to adventure in four towns, each with randomly generated dungeons, as well as nearby wilderness areas.

There are plans to include more than 20 quests, which will be more integral to the plot, as well as revealing the secrets of Diablo. Blizzard also hopes to place over 30 nonplayer characters in the game for you to interact with and learn from.

DIABLO 2 will, naturally, offer more spells, armor, and weapons. Battle.net support will also increase, and Blizzard has plans for more players in multiplayer games, a trading post, and worldwide player rankings. —*Elliott Chin*

THIS JUST IN

Short takes on games and hardware released just prior to press time.

EF2000 V2.0

HOT

After an excruciating delay, the updated version of DID's award-winning EF2000 has finally arrived in North America. EF2000 V2.0 incorporates the products released in Europe as EF2000 TACTICOM and SUPER EF2000, as well as new support for 3D cards based on the Rendition Vérité and 3Dfx Voodoo chipsets. In addition to the 3D support, the sim now features an enhanced mission planner, modem support, a quick-combat mode, support for online play over TEN, DOS and Win 95 executables, and a condensed version of SimTech's *EF2000 Strategy Guide*. About the only downside is lack of support for the Voodoo Rush chipset, so Hercules 128 owners are out of luck.—*Denny Atkin*

Ocean of America, (408) 289-1200

DOS/Win 95 CD-ROM

Reader Service #: 301



SOFTWARE COMPANION FOR PALMPILOT

WARM

With the amount of freeware and shareware available for the PalmPilot online, is $30 for a collection of Pilot software a good deal? The answer is: maybe. Seven of the eleven games on the CD can be downloaded free from the Internet. The other shareware games—two card and two puzzle games—would be $44 to register. And keep in mind when that there are non-game apps on the CD as well, so check the box before you buy. —*Greg Fortune*



Sierra Online, (800) 757-7707

PC CDROM

Reader Service #: 302

News Flash

▶▶▶ Jill Cunniff, lead singer of the rock band **Luscious Jackson**, is the latest rock star to venture into the world of computer gaming. Cunniff will provide the voice of Laura Lewis, the main character in **Sega**'s upcoming title, ENEMY ZERO. Laura, the sole survivor on a spacecraft, must find and kill an invisible enemy alien on board. The game will rely strongly on its audio effects and soundtrack—players will need to pick up audio clues from Laura in order to survive. ENEMY ZERO boasts a score composed by Academy Award nominee **Michael Nyman**. The game is scheduled for a November release.

▶▶▶ In an attempt to make its upcoming first-person 3D-shooter, SIN, "the game that gamers want to play," **Ritual Entertainment** is asking gamers to contribute to the development process. The company invites gamers to make all kinds of suggestions about the game, ranging from what they think characters' names and physical attributes should be to providing ideas about each character's first line of attack and death sequence. Anyone interested in sharing their ideas should send email to **monsters@ritual.com**. Ritual plans to post at least one new character on its Web site (**www.ritual.com**) during the last week of each month, through the end of this year.

Will Tiger Woods Star In A New Golf Game?



PHOTO BY ALLSPORT

Since Tiger Woods has become the new darling of the golfing world, it's hardly surprising that computer game companies everywhere have been clamoring to sign up golf's golden boy to star in their latest and greatest computer golf games.

At press time no agreement had been announced, but we did hear a rumor that EA Sports had nailed the deal. According to one source, Woods will receive more than $12 million over four years to star in a new golf series from EA Sports. Apparently, this series will be completely separate from EA Sports' PGA product line, and will have more of an arcade (rather than sim) feel. The game will be released on multiple platforms including the PC, Mac, Saturn, and N64. At press time, the official word from EA Sports was that they were still in negotiations, along with other game companies, and that no agreement had been reached.

EA Sports Internet Tour Offers $60,000 in Prize Money

If your dreams of becoming a pro-golfer were dashed because, well, you couldn't drive a golf ball farther than your grandmother could throw an elephant, do not fear. If you can control your mouse finger better than you can your golfer's swing, you may still have a chance to make some big-time money at your favorite sport.

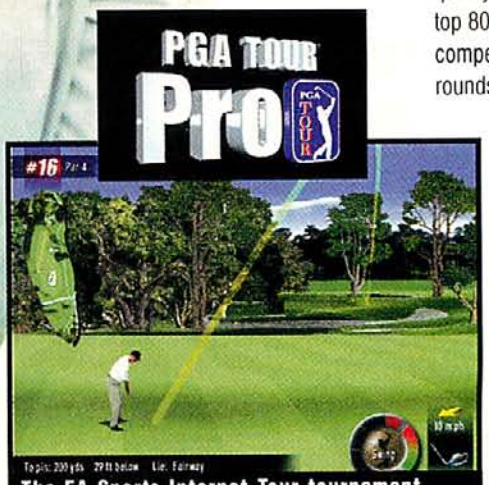
EA Sports is hosting the first professional online golf tour, with over $60,000 in prize money. Officially licensed by the PGA Tour, the EA Sports Internet Tour will consist of five online tournaments to be held free of charge on EA Sports Net, an EA-operated service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The tournament is open to anyone who owns EA Sports' PGA Tour Pro, and has access to an ISP.

The first four tournaments are each worth $5,650, and the top four finalists at each of these events will be awarded prize money based on actual PGA Tour prize money distribution formulas. The fifth and final tournament's purse is $37,400. Each of the twelve finalists will win cash prizes and the overall winner will receive $10,000.

The initial four tournaments kick off with an open 18-hole qualifying round, after which the top 80 players will be invited to compete in the second and third rounds. The top four finalist from the third rounds will then be flown to that week's actual PGA Tour tournament site to play the final championship computer round in person.

If you're interested in participating in the tournament, or if you'd like to spectate, more information is available at **www.easportstour.com**.

—Charlotte Panther

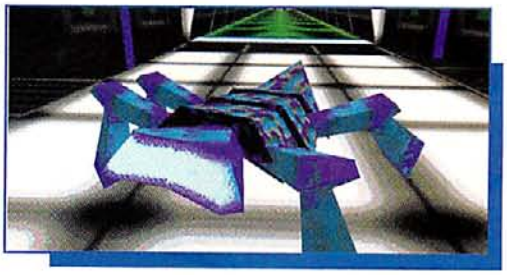


The EA Sports Internet Tour tournament is officially licensed by the PGA. You'll need PGA Tour Pro and an ISP account to compete.

Galapagos: Mendel's Escape

Anark Unveils a Genre-crossing Game With Astonishing AI

GALAPAGOS: MENDEL'S ESCAPE is one of those unique, weird little games that may not sound too exciting when you hear about it, seems kind of dumb when you first look at it, but, once you actually get your hands on it, turns out to be surprisingly compelling and dang near impossible to put down.





Developed by Anark Games Studio and distributed by Electronic Arts, GALAPAGOS is a "cross-genre" game, combining elements of action, adventure, and puzzle games into something wholly original. The game takes place in the world of Galapagos, a futuristic, imperialist society that is in the process of creating experimental, autonomous machines of war to further expand its power. Such a machine is Mendel, a synthetic, four-legged spider-like creature, who at the game's beginning is trapped in a lab, on the verge of being subjected to torturous experimentation.

Unlike most synthetic war machines, however, Mendel is a harmless, cute little fella, who emits little burbles and squeaks like R2D2. So, naturally, it's our job to rescue him.

Your job is to lead, coax, and prod Mendel through a series of bizarre, dangerous landscapes—such as moving platforms, electric rails, and hidden ledges—until he makes his way to freedom.

GALAPAGOS' coolest concept is that Mendel truly has a mind of his own, responding to your actions, and learning from and reacting to them. If you send Mendel plummeting over a cliff, for example, he might move a little more hesitantly upon regeneration. Guide him successfully, and his confidence grows. He also moves more quickly and more bravely through the world. In this way, you really begin to grow attached to Mendel the longer you keep him alive.



The only problem I really had in the beta was that it was, surprisingly, way too difficult. The designers use save points rather than a "save anywhere" feature, which I believe is the right call, but there's just not *enough* save points, which means you play long sequences of the game over and over. A few more save points would severely reduce the chance of gamers destroying their keyboards, throwing a raging hissy-fit, or going completely insane. I did all three. Nevertheless, I do plan on playing it when it ships later this year. Like those stupid little Tamagotchis that kids are carrying around these days, Mendel really gets under your skin.

—Jeff Green

THIS JUST IN

CRUSH DELUXE

CG GOLD

Ever since the movie *Rollerball*, sci-fi sports games have bounced, slammed and jostled their way into every gaming medium. CRUSH DELUXE, the latest sci-fi "sport," plays a lot like a boardgame: it's turn-based and requires that you move your aliens over a square grid, searching for the BALL (Bionic Augmented Life Form). There are some nice touches, such as customizing and outfitting your team members with spiked battle armor, gravity boots, and other high-tech toys. Yet the sense of humor often falls flat, and the gameplay is so slow and uninspiring that it isn't likely to keep your interest long enough for you to try the career or all-star modes.—*Terry Coleman*

Megamedia Corp., (800) MEG-AMED
Win 95 CD-ROM
Reader Service #: 303



TIME WARRIORS

CG WARM

TIME WARRIORS, from Silmarils and Malofilm, is a good-looking fighting game, with support for 3Dfx, ATI, and Matrox 3D accelerators. The gameplay is pretty standard, following the MORTAL KOMBAT school of magic effects and blood-spilling attacks. There are 10 playable characters, each with their own different attacks and styles. All the characters also wield weapons, drawing comparison to BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN, which also has 3D graphics and weapon-wielding warriors. Gameplay isn't near the depth of STREET FIGHTER II or VIRTUA FIGHTER, but is at least on par with TOSHINDEN. With good 3D graphics and 3D support, it's not a bad game for fighting game fans.—*Elliott Chin*



Silmarils/ Malofilm, (514) 844-4555
PC CD-ROM
Reader Service #: 304

News Flash

Sierra On-Line announced that it is developing and publishing HELLFIRE, the only authorized add-on disk for DIABLO. Developed by Sierra's **Synergistic Software** division, this eight-level expansion pack will add enhancements and gameplay features for the single-player mode to the original DIABLO universe. Twenty new monsters will be introduced, along with thirty new magic items and five unique new spells. HELLFIRE will be available in November for a suggested retail price of $29.95.

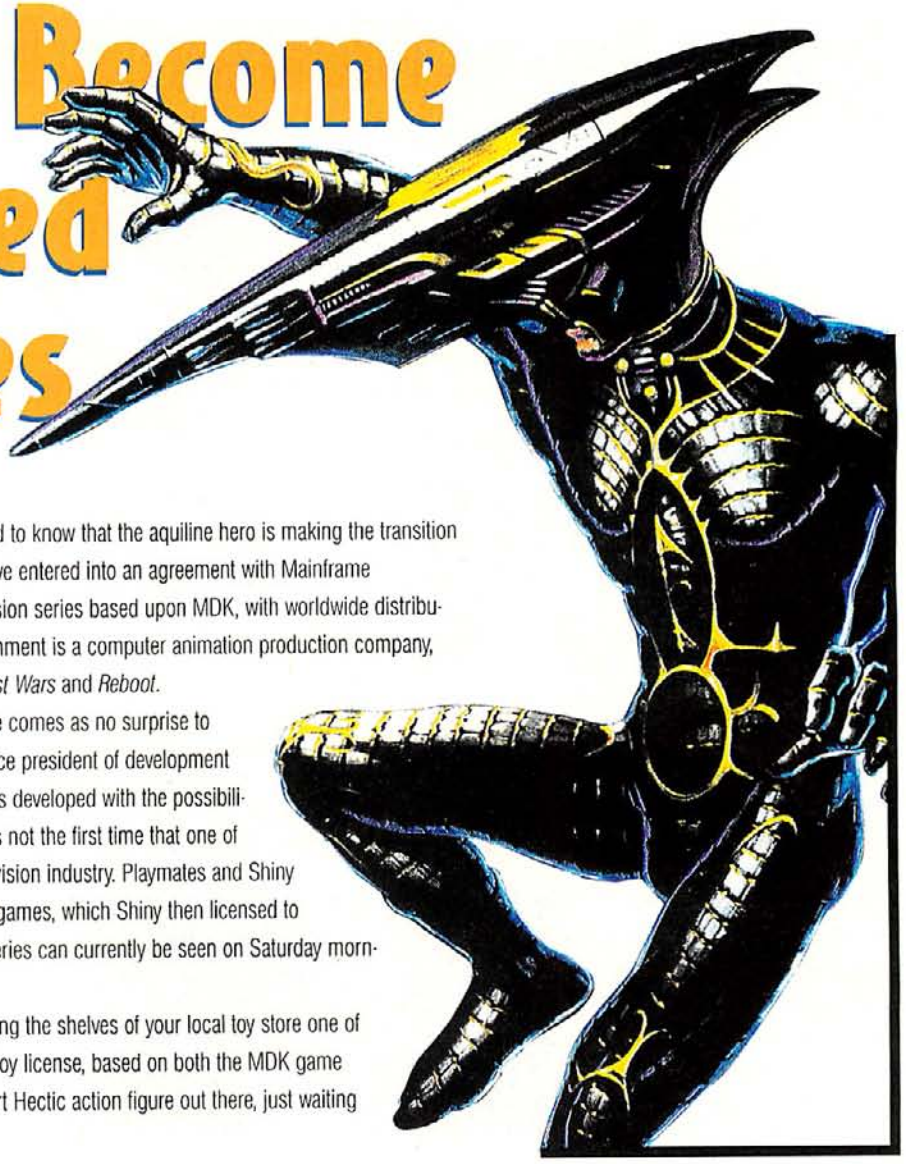
Parroty Interactive, the gang who brought us STARWARPED and PYST, has already identified its next victim. Fox's popular sci-fi series, ***The X-Files***, will fall prey to Parroty's acidic wit and sarcasm in X-FOOLS—A PARANOID, PARANORMAL PARODY.

The spoof will, of course, star venerable agents Scully and



Mulder, oops, I mean Mully and Scudder, as they continue their eternal quest for the truth. Is the truth out there? We have no idea, but X-FOOLS is out there—the game will be on store shelves by the time you're reading this.

MDK To Become Animated TV Series



Fans of Kurt Hectic, the lead character in Playmate Interactive/Shiny's recent 3D shoot-'em-up, MDK, will be pleased to know that the aquiline hero is making the transition from monitor to TV screen. Playmates and Shiny have entered into an agreement with Mainframe Entertainment, Inc., to develop and distribute a television series based upon MDK, with worldwide distribution rights targeted for Fall 1998. Mainframe Entertainment is a computer animation production company, whose credits include the currently airing series *Beast Wars* and *Reboot*.

The progression from computer screen to the tube comes as no surprise to either Shiny or Playmates. In fact, Gary Rosenfeld, vice president of development and business affairs at Playmates, says that MDK was developed with the possibility in mind of expanding into another medium. This is not the first time that one of their products has engendered interest from the television industry. Playmates and Shiny also worked together on the popular EARTHWORM JIM games, which Shiny then licensed to Universal Television. The *Earthworm Jim* animated series can currently be seen on Saturday mornings, on the WB Kid's Network.

And don't be surprised if you see Mr. Hectic gracing the shelves of your local toy store one of these days. Playmates Toys has secured the master toy license, based on both the MDK game and the television series so you can bet there's a Kurt Hectic action figure out there, just waiting to spread his wings. *—Charlotte Panther*

THIS JUST IN

XCAR

CG HOT



Do you have a fetish for sizzling state-of-the-art automotive technology? XCAR helps you explore those desires by letting you race experimental vehicles that represent prototypes of tomorrow's high-performance cars. Choose your car from a menu of 16 autos and customize virtually every aspect of its performance, from the engine to the tires. Once you've built your ultimate racing machine, you can take it out on one of 10 tracks and experience the intense speed these cars deliver. Add to all this an action mode and multiplayer support, and XCAR comes out a winner. *—Matthew Schaefer*

Bethesda Softworks, (301) 963-2002

DOS CD-ROM

Reader Service #: 305

OUTPOST 2

CG WARM

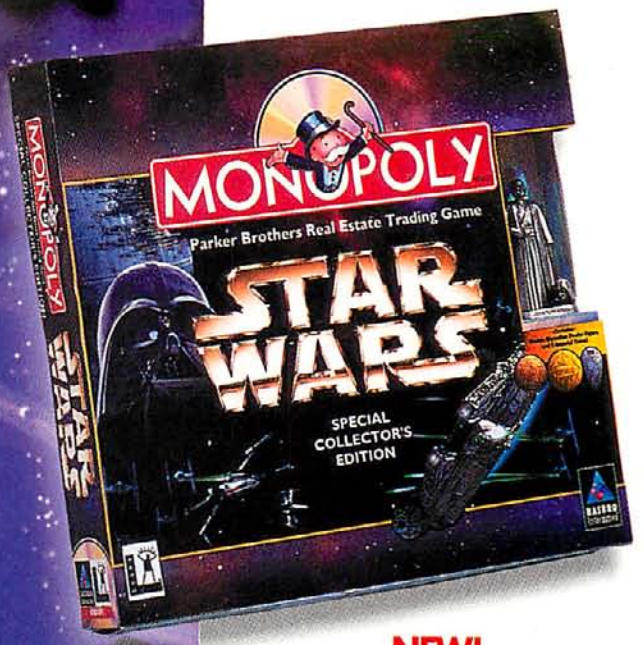
The first OUTPOST was a disaster, a game that had good graphics and a good premise but just wasn't complete. OUTPOST 2, in contrast, has a completely different style of gameplay, moving to realtime, and a more complete design. You play as one of two competing colonies established on a hostile planet. Each side has its own campaign and a story that involves fighting the rival colony and a destructive plague. Though gameplay is similar in look to COMMAND & CONQUER, it has a greater depth, with the necessity to build nonmilitary buildings for research and production. Though it sounds and plays like a better game than the original OUTPOST, the final verdict won't come until our review next month. *—Elliott Chin.*

Sierra Online, (800) 757-7707

PC CD-ROM

Reader Service #: 306





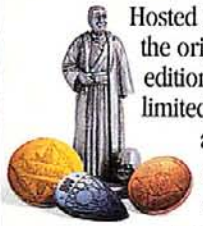
When buying galactic real estate, remember three key words.

Location. Location. Location.

NEW! The Monopoly Star Wars Special Collector's Edition. Now exclusively at Wal-Mart.

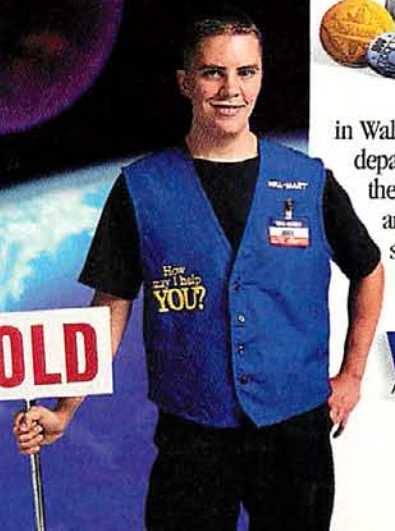
The world's most popular board game has joined forces with Wal-Mart and the #1 movie trilogy of all time to bring you the Monopoly Star Wars Special Collector's Edition. But in order to find this one-of-a-kind edition of the galactic game of real estate, you have to start with the right location. Because it's only available at Wal-Mart.

With Monopoly Star Wars, you play just like the classic version, except on your PC. And instead of the race car, Park Place and Boardwalk, one of eight full-motion 3-D Star Wars characters guide you to galactic properties like Endor and Dagobah, where you build starports and view classic movie clips from the Star Wars Trilogy.



Hosted by Anthony Daniels, the original C3PO, this special edition also comes with three limited edition Imperial coins, a collectible pewter figure of Anakin Skywalker, and a letter of authenticity.

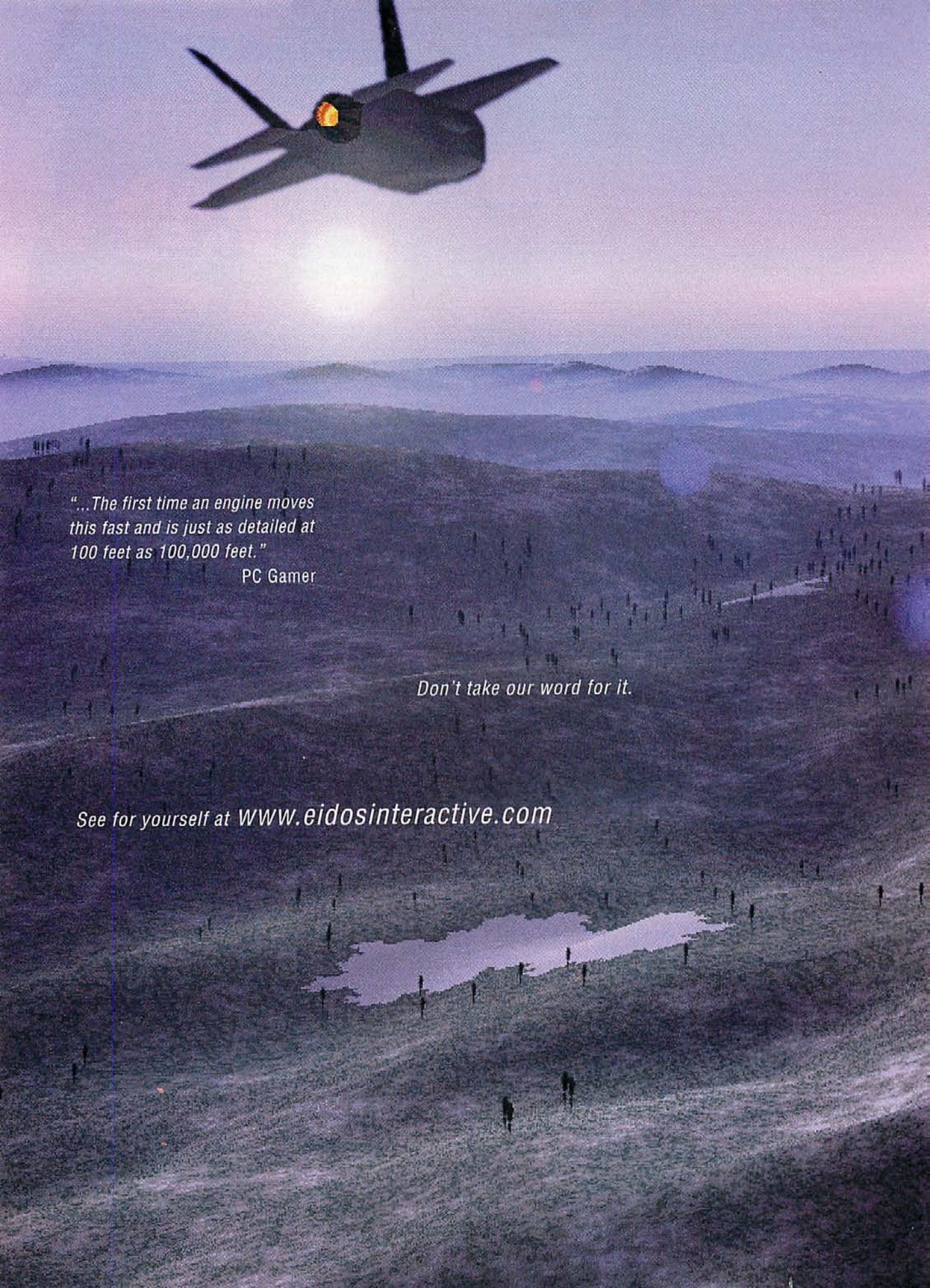
And all the excitement begins in Wal-Mart's newly upgraded computer department. With an expanded selection of the newest and hottest computer software and games at every day low prices, you're sure to agree, location is everything.

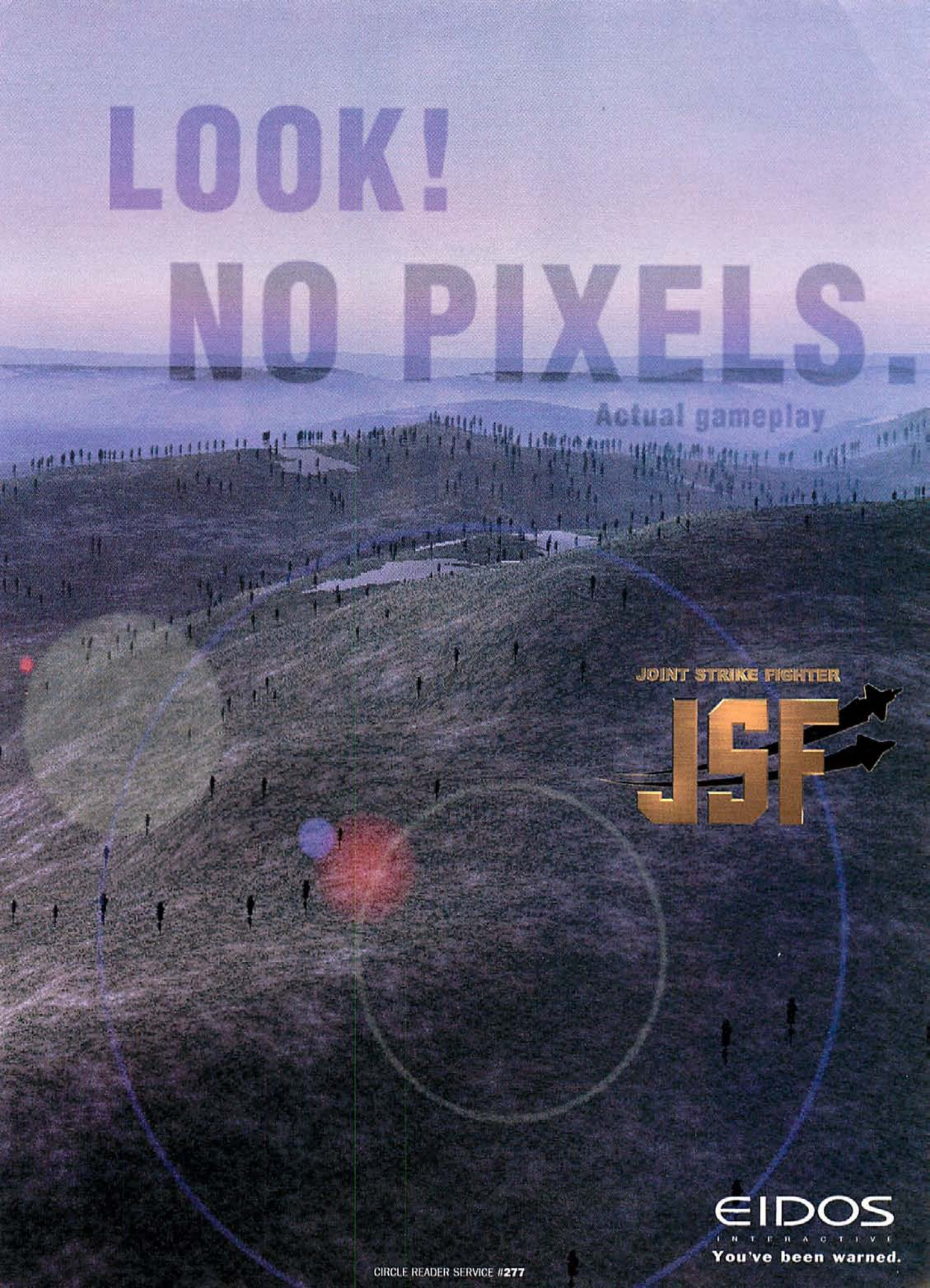


Joel, Wal-Mart associate

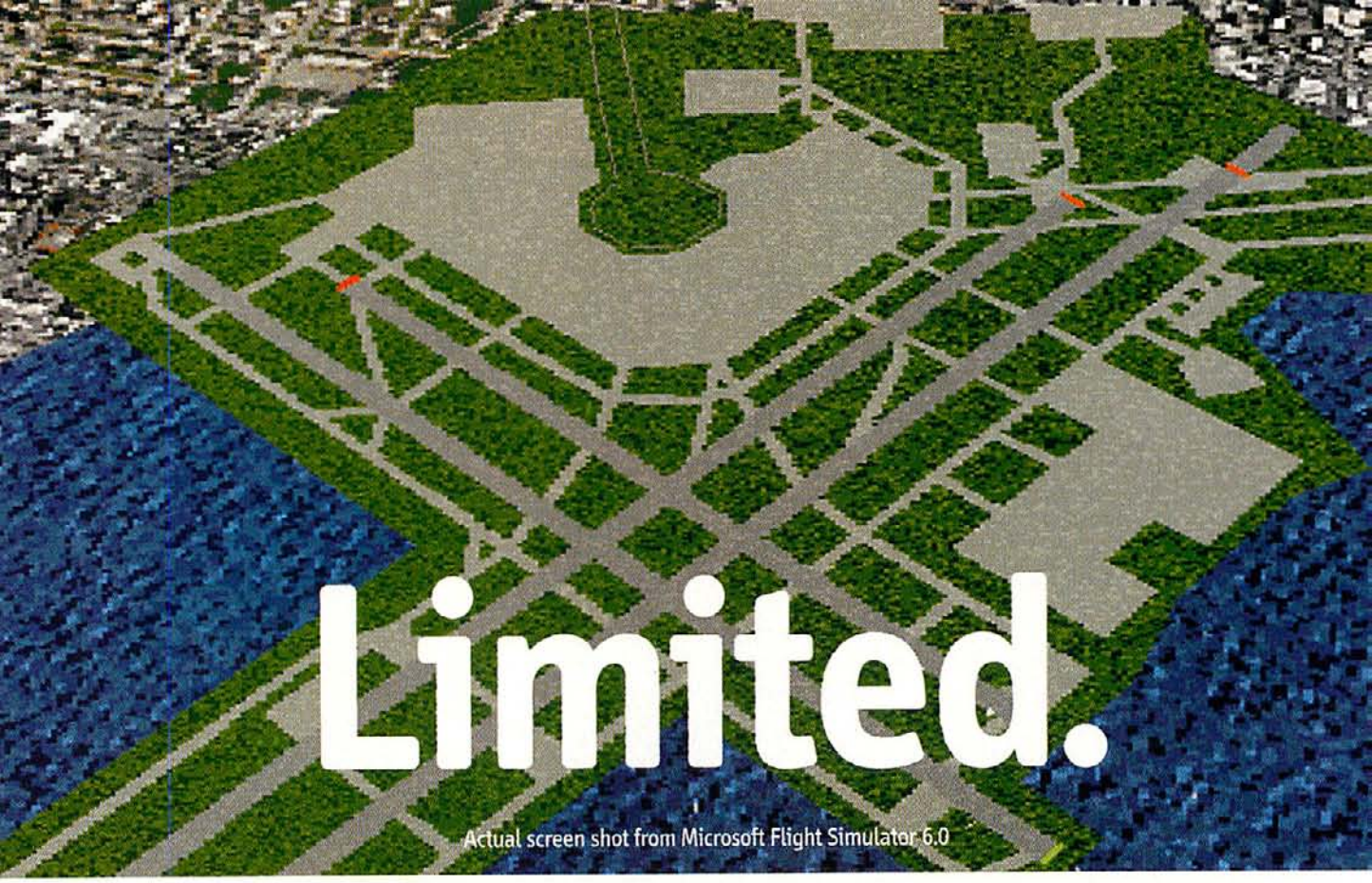
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #277



Finally, a flight sim with no limits. Flight Unlimited II from Looking Glass. The most realistic flight experience ever in a PC simulation.


Beechcraft Baron 58

Flight Unlimited II sets a whole new standard with realism, thrills and adventures you won't find in any other flight sim. Fly the speedy Piper Arrow over 11,000 square miles of breathtaking, photo-realistic Bay Area terrain. Jump in the cockpit of the notorious P-51D Mustang. Or, mix it up with over 400 different aircraft using ground, tower and approach controllers. Whether you're a rookie or an experienced pilot, take off with the most realistic flight sim ever.


DeHaviland Beaver DHC-2 Seaplane


North American P-51D Mustang

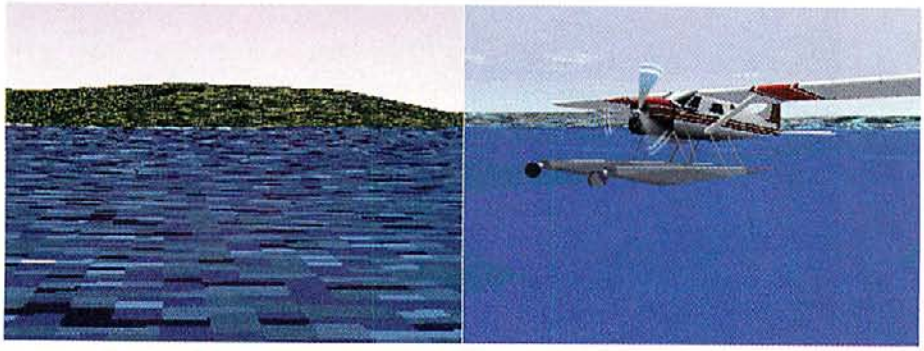

Piper Arrow 200

LOOKING GLASS TECHNOLOGIES. www.lglass.com

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Unlimited.

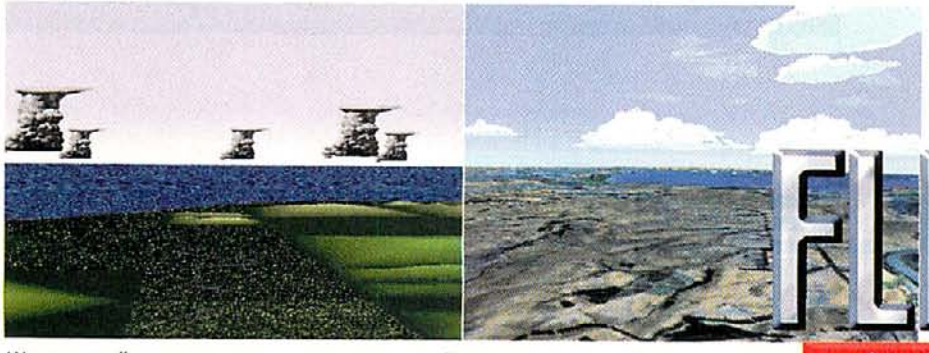
Actual screen shot from Looking Glass' Flight Unlimited II



FLY THE DEHAVILAND BEAVER SEAPLANE IN FLIGHT UNLIMITED II AND ACTUALLY LAND ON WATER. FLIGHT SIMULATOR MAY HAVE WATER, BUT IT SURE DOESN'T HAVE A SEAPLANE.

"Microsoft should have cause for concern...Flight Unlimited II's stunningly rendered world is only exceeded in excellence by its smooth interface."

"E3's Best of the Best"
Computer & Net Player



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FLIGHT UNLIMITED II

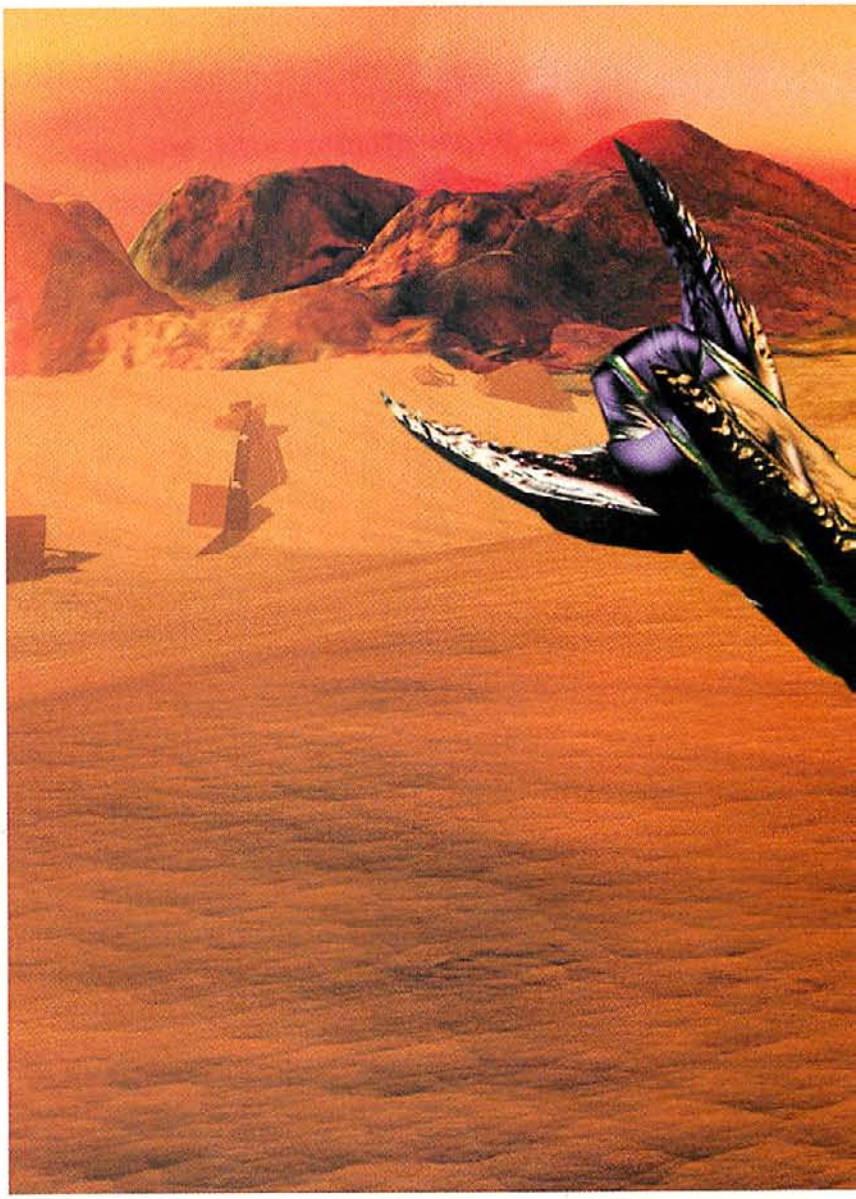
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EIDOS INTERACTIVE

CIRCLE READER SERVICE #069

YOU'VE LOOKED

Even your high school yearbook picture was more becoming than this. But as an alien, glamour is not high on your agenda. So, bust out of the traditional strategy game mold, morph into a human and make enemies with your friends. Conquest Earth is a world you'll want to step into very carefully.



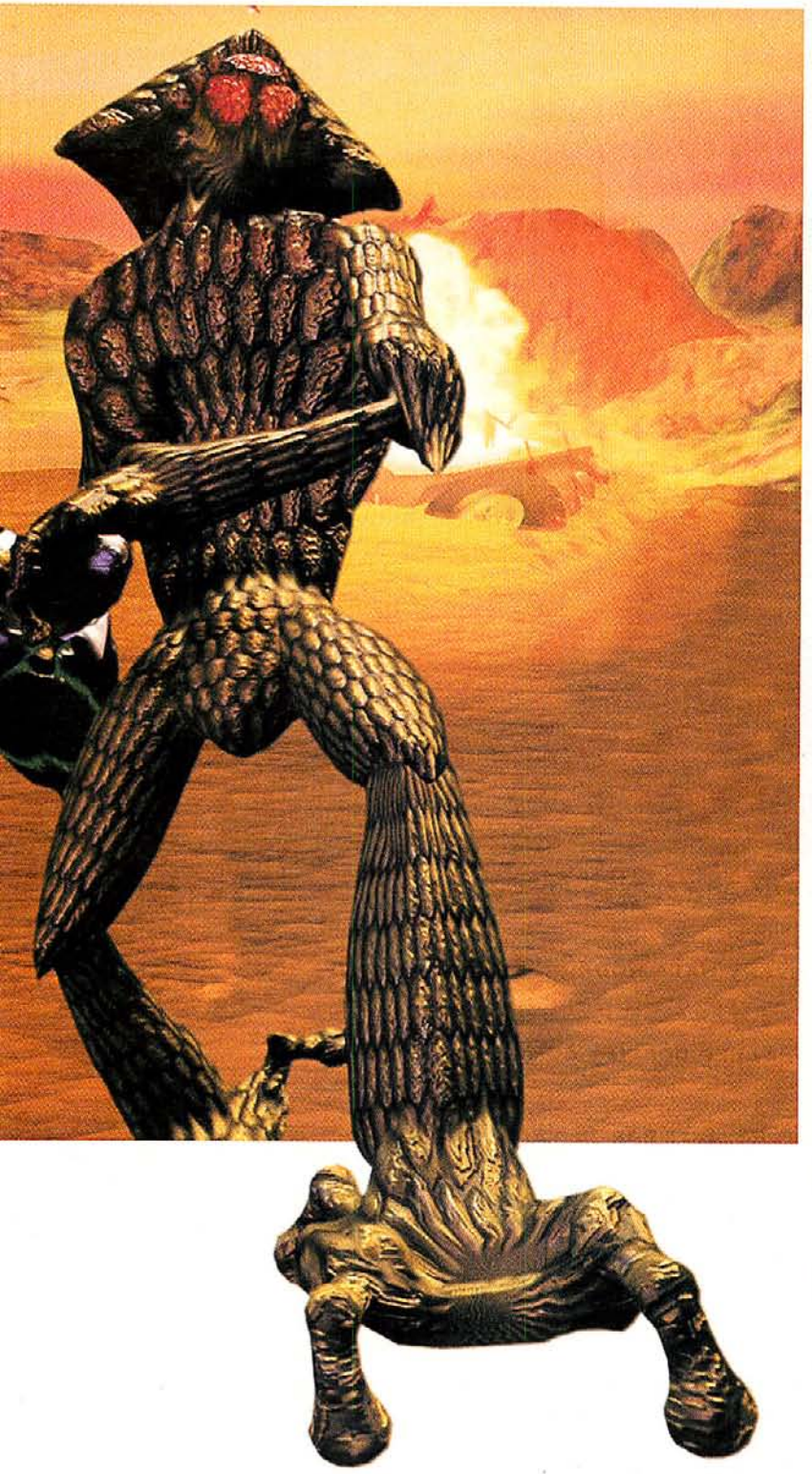
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CONQUEST EARTH

WHERE STRATEGY TAKES ON A NEW FORM

BETTER.





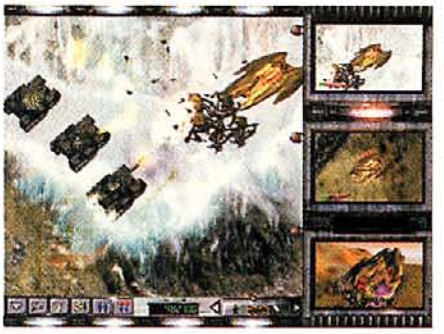
You can play either side in this intergalactic strategy game. Instantly morph into a weapon or battle tank—even a human being.



When playing the alien side, you'll experience a unique interface with different rules and capabilities. You'll employ never-before-seen tactics and strategies to foil your human counterparts.



Vary your strategy to keep your opponents guessing. Keep track by monitoring them through your interface portals. With over 65,000 colors, the action will come to life like never before.



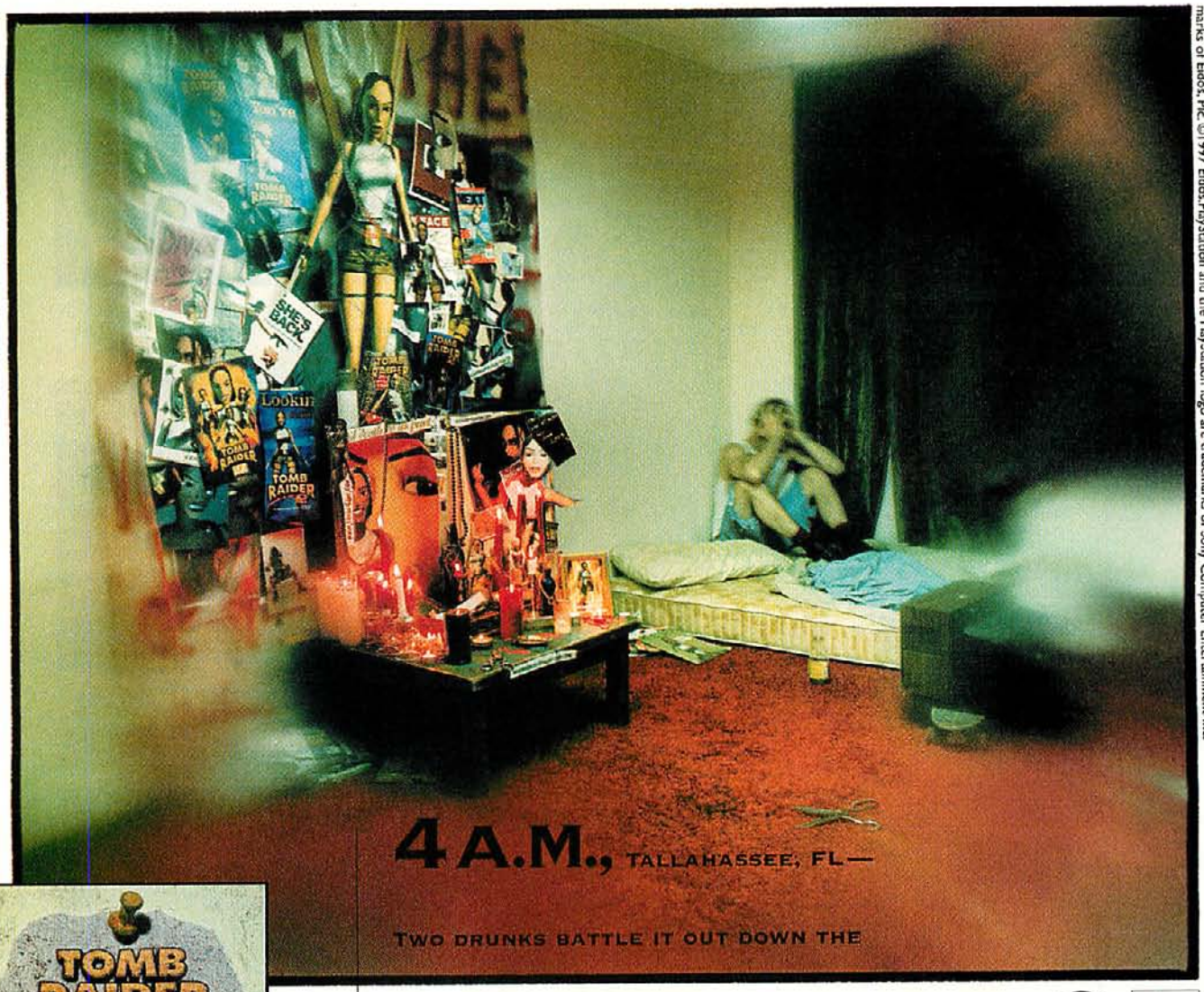
Playing the human side, you'll need to manage your resources wisely. Thwart the aliens' attempt to mine oxygen from the atmosphere. Only one race will remain standing after this war. Make sure its yours.

WWW.CONQUESTEARTH.COM

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EIDOS INTERACTIVE

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4 A.M., TALLAHASSEE, FL—

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TOMB RAIDER II
STARRING LARA CROFT

PC CD

PlayStation

CORE



inset photos

Top: The Second Coming, slated for this fall. **Bottom:** Preparing for her return.

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Get behind the stick of the coolest civilian aircraft.
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE # 115



Dancing With the Dead

▸▸▸Continued from pg 42

Instead of fighting the tech limitations of 3D, you have to embrace [them] and turn them into a style."

Thus, GRIM FANDANGO has a very distinct style, mixing the macabre skeletons of the Day of the Dead festival with the gritty look of film noir. Schafer also decided to use Latino actors for authentic accents—a nice touch.

When asked about his inspiration for this unique-looking and uniquely plotted game, Schafer says, "The earliest inspiration was a folklore class I took at UC Berkeley. We had a whole unit on the Day of the Dead of Mexican folklore, and the four-year journey through the Land of the Dead. When I heard about the four-year journey, it screamed adventure game to me.

"It was interesting how the Day of the Dead folklore had an element of corruption to it, how people would hide money in the lining of their coffin. That gave me an idea for the Land of the Dead being a treacherous place. That had a similarity to film noir, that treachery and corruption. Lots of games have tried the noir thing before, but it's pretty standard, with the detective behind the desk. I thought the Day of the Dead would be a new way of doing it."

In addition to presenting us with an interesting setting and story, Schafer also gives us more character development than in typical adventure games: "In an average adventure game, you spend a few days with a character. Since this game spans four years, the character really goes through some major transitions and develops much deeper interpersonal relationships."

It is still very early in the game's development, but already the story and art look extremely promising. It has a unique look, a funny and clever story, and a four-year-long plot that allows more character development and deeper relations between characters. With all of Tim Schafer's signature game design, GRIM FANDANGO bears watching. *CGW* will bring you an in-depth preview in the coming months as we learn more about Schafer's humorous foray into the Land of the Dead. *—Elliott Chin*





MANNY CALAVERA Most of the characters, including the main skeleton, Manny, have Latin accents provided by Latino actors. To have anyone else do them, says Schafer, would be "hokey and wrong."

THIS JUST IN

LOSE YOUR MARBLES

Procrastinators be warned: This addictive little puzzle could well replace TETRIS as your "just one more game and then I'll start work" excuse. The idea is to clear your marbles off the grid by lining up three or more of the same color, before your opponent clears his. If you manage to line up five in a row, you'll dump more marbles on your rival. While the single-player game provides a terrific distraction and a chance to brush up your skills, playing multi-player (hotseat or LAN) will really awaken those competitive urges. LOSE YOUR MARBLES is fast-paced, frustrating, and most of all, fun. *—Charlotte Panther*



SegaSoft, (888) SEGASOFT
Win 95 CD-ROM
Reader Service #: 307

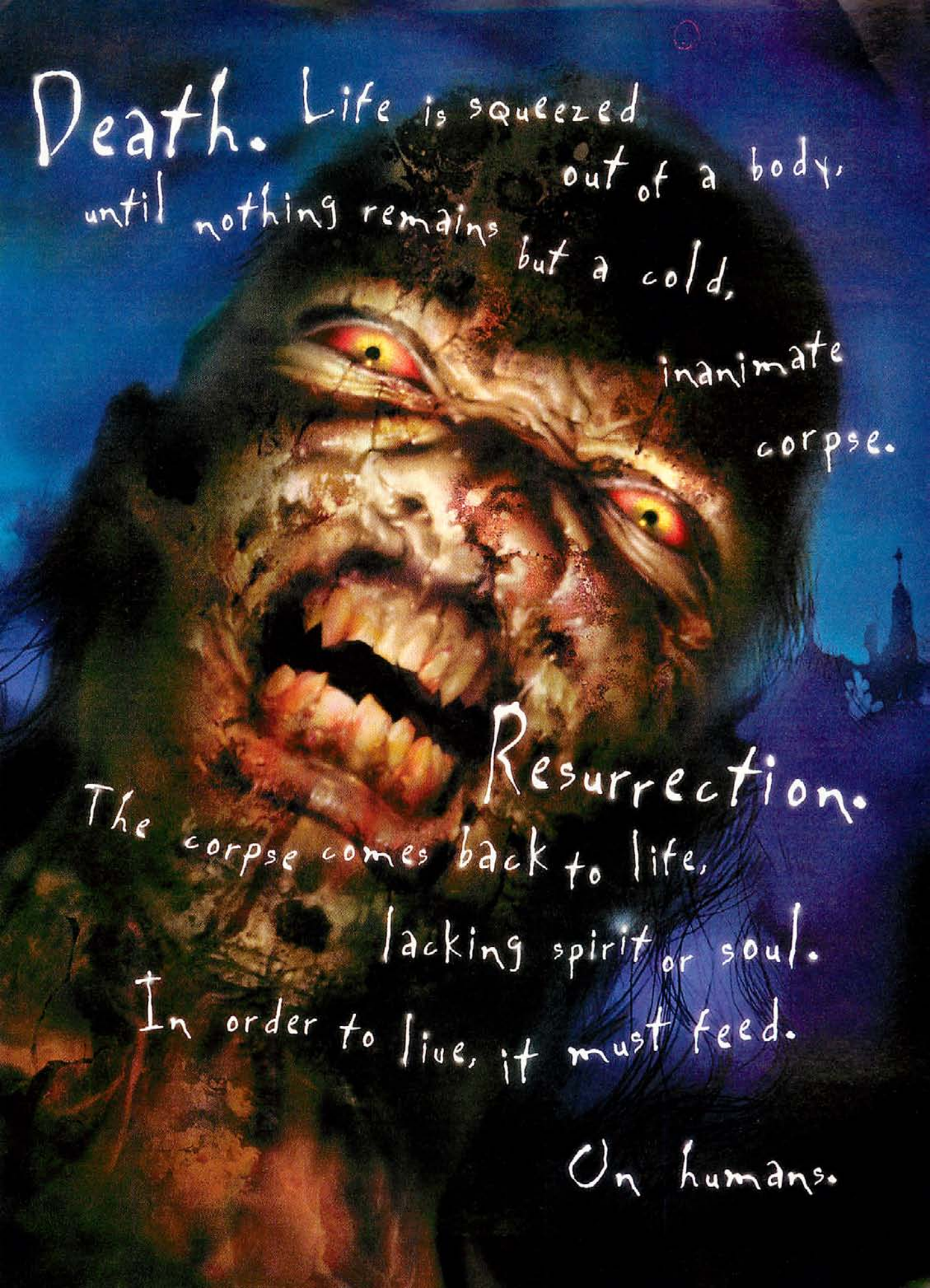
BIRTHRIGHT

BIRTHRIGHT is one of those cross-genre titles that does only a fair job in each genre, but actually is a pretty good game as a whole. As a Regent of a province, you must build up your forces and defeat the mighty Gorgon. The game combines a heavy dose of strategic realm management with a bit of tactical combat and a dash of first-person adventure/role-playing. You can play each type separately, but it's better to play as a whole package.



BIRTHRIGHT has a pretty steep learning curve, but, if you have the time to figure it out, it's a pretty good way to spend $30. *—Thierry Nguyen*

Sierra On-line, (800) 757-7707
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Death. Life is squeezed
out of a body,
until nothing remains but a cold,
inanimate
corpse.
Resurrection.
The corpse comes back to life,
lacking spirit or soul.
In order to live, it must feed.
On humans.

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Then, in the climactic finale, penetrate the complex that houses the secrets to the dead's resurrection. FLESH FEAST. IF YOU'RE ONLY CONSUMED BY FEAR, YOU'RE ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES.



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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #271

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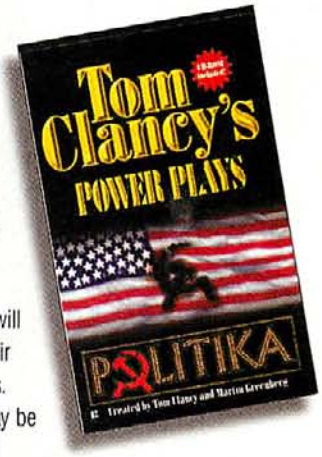
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #128

TELST

Politika Game Packaged With Clancy's Latest Novel



When *CGW* interviewed Tom Clancy recently about his new company, Red Storm Entertainment (a joint venture with Virtus Corporation), Clancy stated that one of the goals of Red Storm was to bring PC gaming to the mainstream. A recent announcement from the Berkeley Publishing Group, publishers of Clancy's latest novel, *Politika*, marks the first step in doing exactly that.

Berkeley will package *Politika*, the book, with an interactive CD-ROM of Red Storm's upcoming game, also called POLITIKA. The paperback and mini-CD package will retail for $7.50.

The mini-CD allows players to play the first few levels of the game. If you wish to continue playing, the rest of the game will be available for download on the Web for an additional fee of $29.95. The good news is that Red Storm has included most of the heavy, graphic-intensive material on the mini-CD, so your download shouldn't be too painful.

The book and the game follow the same basic plot. The death of President Boris Yeltsin, in Russia, leaves the country with no obvious successor, and the major factions are struggling for control. The interactive game, however, will allow players to develop their own plot line and outcomes. The book and the game may be packaged together, but Red Storm is emphasizing that you don't necessarily have to read the book to enjoy the game—both can be treated as independent entertainment vehicles.

All in all, though, the paperback and CD bundle, which will be available the first week in November, sounds like a great deal. With the game alone retailing at $49.95, you stand to save yourself about 12 bucks, as long as you don't mind dealing with the download time.

—Charlotte Panther

Get Some Monkey Madness



LucasArts' latest archive pack—conveniently set for release this fall, as anticipation for THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND rises—contains some of the company's best products to date. LUCASARTS ARCHIVES VOLUME III includes hits such as DARK FORCES, one of the best action shooters ever; FULL THROTTLE; AFTERLIFE; and THE DIG. The collection of LucasArts' most popular adventure games, including MONKEY ISLAND MADNESS (both THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND and MONKEY ISLAND 2: LECHUCK'S REVENGE) round out the bundle nicely.

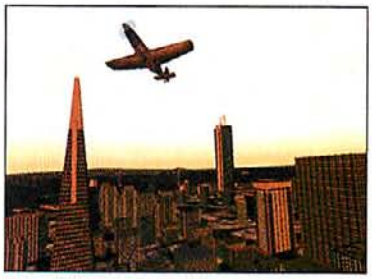


THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND The first game in LucasArts' popular MONKEY ISLAND series.

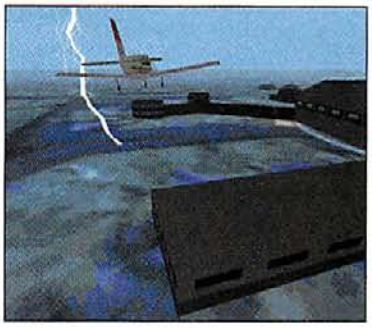
An excellent buy for MONKEY ISLAND fans (and Tim Schafer fans, since it includes every game he's worked on except DAY OF THE TENTACLE), especially since right now, it's hard to find *any* copies of MONKEY ISLAND 1 and 2 anywhere. If you haven't yet picked up some of these classics, LUCASARTS ARCHIVES VOLUME III will make a great addition to your gaming library.

—Thierry Nguyen

The Sky's Alive



Looking Glass Technologies' FLIGHT UNLIMITED II will not only feature photorealistic terrain, but also a number of weather effects to heighten the game's realism. Here are a couple of shots our photo-recon team brought back.



News Flash

Activision recently announced that it has signed an agreement to acquire **Raven Software**, developers of HEXEN, HERETIC, and the upcoming HEXEN II. Once the acquisition is complete, Raven will become a wholly owned subsidiary of Activision. Activision does not expect the acquisition to affect Raven's business relationship with **id Software**. Id executive produced HEXEN II.

In related news, **Activision** announced that it has signed a deal with **Avalon Hill** to acquire worldwide rights to develop and publish future interactive games based on Avalon Hill's *Civilization* strategy boardgame. This allows Activision the long-term rights to produce an unlimited number of *Civilization* computer games. **MicroProse**, producer of Sid Meier's original CIVILIZATION computer game series (which many would say is similar to Avalon Hill's boardgame), retains the rights to its own CIVILIZATION line.

LucasArts recently released HANDFUL OF MISSIONS, an expansion pack for OUTLAWS. Set before OUTLAWS, it's made up of nine new levels (four single-player and five multiplayer) including Civil War-era missions based in war-torn towns and trenches, a mission in the ice-caves of the Rocky Mountains, and one set inside the confines of a Spanish Villa. HANDFUL OF MISSIONS is free, and is available either for download from **www.lucasarts.com** or on a CD-ROM (you can get it with a mail-in coupon).



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THE FALLEN LORDS

CIRCLE READER SERVICE #264

Temujin, the Wrath of Genghis Khan

In the Works ▸

Set in a small museum, SouthPeak Interactive's TEMUJIN charges you with finding out who's behind a plot to resurrect Genghis Khan as a servant to the evil spirit Wah-Jin. With seemingly every museum employee being unbalanced or driven enough to have motive, your work is cut out for you. The mystery quotient is doubled since you also must recover lost memories to discover your own identity. In addition to traditional adventure game sleuthing you'll use two unconventional tools to get to the truth—a mystic camera that photographs paranormal auras, and a mystic jigsaw puzzle for literally piecing together telling scenes.

Shot entirely on 35mm film without rendered backgrounds, TEMUJIN uses the Video Reality game engine. This allows for 360 degrees of viewing freedom and a smooth-scrolling, first person perspective as you move through the museum on predetermined rails. While it sounds great, walking through the museum was incredibly slow in the beta version I played, undercutting the game's suspense with brain-buzzing tedium. Hopefully, this will be addressed before it's released. Visually, TEMUJIN is impressive, with crisp, clear images that are especially noteworthy in the numerous FMV sequences that run in the game window.

Much of the game is spent triggering those video sequences and most of them inject more than a little *Peyton Place* into the suspense. Puzzles run the gamut from simple word jumbles to assembling elaborate Rube Goldberg-type machines. If SouthPeak can speed up the game engine, TEMUJIN, with its psychological thrills and sharp graphics, might just find an audience.

—Robert Coffey



Mei, Genghis Khan's concubine, longs for someone to free her captured spirit.



To solve the puzzle you must find a way to get past the scorpions.

Black Dahlia: The Plot Thickens

In the Works ▸

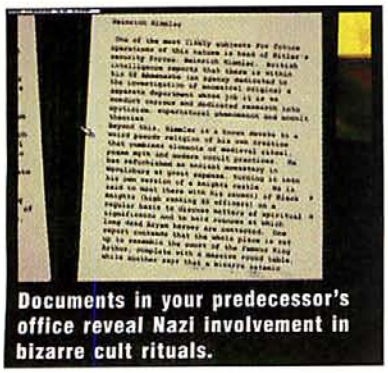
A few months ago, *CGW* told you about Dennis Hopper's involvement in BLACK DAHLIA, Take 2's promising new adventure game. Now we've had a chance to fiddle around with a beta version of the game, so here's the skinny on gameplay.

As a rookie agent in the newly created COI, your routine Nazi subversion case takes on an occult slant relating to the Cleveland Torso Murderer. Like many FMV-heavy games, you'll hear lots of dialogue in the form of movie conversations. You'll spend the majority of your time talking to people and gathering information to which you'll keep referring back. As the notebook feature had not yet been implemented in the beta version I played, I had to go back to old-school note-taking with a pen and paper. Once the notebook is functional, though, it will allow you to input information. In addition to listening to the dialogue, you will also have to figure out plot-based puzzles.

The interface has been streamlined to one icon that automatically allows you to move, to pick up an item, or to use an item by left-clicking. Right-clicking calls up the menu screen for the inventory, world map, and various game options. One particularly nice detail is that you have the ability to look around your environment (similar to QUAKE's "mlook" feature) instead of a single locked view, as is usually found in this type of game.

So far, the game looks intriguing. As for Dennis Hopper's contribution, you'll have to wait for the full review to hear about that—his scenes were yet to be implemented in the build I played.

—Thierry Nguyen



Documents in your predecessor's office reveal Nazi involvement in bizarre cult rituals.

PLAYING LATELY

CGW Survey*

	Last Month	Months on Chart
1. **Diablo** (Blizzard)	1	7
2. **Civilization II** (MicroProse)	2	18
3. **Quake** (id Software)	4	11
4. **Heroes II** (New World Computing)	5	8
5. **Red Alert** (Westwood/Virgin)	6	8
6. **Duke Nukem 3D** (3D Realms)	3	19
7. **Heroes II: POL** (New World Computing)	10	2
8. **Daggerfall** (Bethesda)	-	9
8. **Magic: The Gathering** (MicroProse)	6	3
8. **X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter** (LucasArts)	-	2

** Check your mailbox: We mail a survey to 1,500 randomly-chosen subscribers each month. The results of Playing Lately indicate what games readers are blowing the most time on, as opposed to the reader's overall "quality ranking" in the Top 100.*

PC Data Best-Sellers**

1. **Myst** (Broderbund)	1
2. **Diablo** (Blizzard)	2
3. **Dungeon Keeper** (Electronic Arts)	-
4. **Links LS 1998** (Access)	-
5. **Microsoft Flight** Simulator (Microsoft)	6
6. **X-COM: Apocalypse** (MicroProse)	-
7. **Monopoly Multimedia** (Hasbro Interactive)	5
8. **Red Alert** (Westwood/Virgin)	4
9. **X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter** (LucasArts)	3
9. **WarCraft Battle Chest** (Blizzard/Davidson)	-

*** This list indicates which PC games were the top-sellers, as calculated by PC Data, during July 1997.*

Frivolous Patent Claim Causes Headaches

A lawyer representing Craig Enokian, of Palos Heights, Illinois, has sent letters to several software companies, including Electronic Arts and LucasArts, informing them that they are potentially liable for patent infringement for computer programs containing video sequences of performances by living beings.

Enokian's attorney, Ernest Kettleson, is demanding that software companies cease and desist in the manufacture and sale of these games, or that the companies pay licensing fees to his client.

Scott Miller, president of Apogee Software, said that his attorneys don't believe that the claim has any merit, but that it could get expensive if Mr. Enokian decides to go to court.

Enokian owns US Patent No. 4,662,635, issued on May 5, 1987. The patent allegedly covers a video game which uses a television or cathode ray tube to display plays previously performed by living beings and recorded on a video medium.

Mark Traphagen, counsel for the Software Publishers Association, says that SPA has been tracking the case for over a year. "We're not aware of any suits that have been filed. It hasn't engendered much concern," he says.

Enokian's patent specifically describes a device which plays back one or more video tapes. The example cited is a football game in which one player chooses a play for his team to execute and the opposing player chooses a defense. The selected plays are encoded on the device, which then plays both actions back on the television display.

SPA is championing patent reform legislation currently before the Senate that would give software companies low-cost alternatives to litigation involving "junk patents." The bill passed the House this spring, and SPA hopes it will be enacted by the end of this year. *—Kate Hedstrom*

Top 10 Games From the Dark Side

This issue goes on sale in October, the time of year when many cultures exorcise their personal and cultural demons. However, most gamers would prefer exercising demons to exorcising them, so we've compiled a list of the darkest games currently, or soon to be, available. If you're looking for eerie locales, blood, gore, and a taste of horror, you can't go far wrong with these titles.

1. HEXEN II (Activision) Play a necromancer, an assassin, a crusader, or a paladin in this game of sorcery, suspense, and supernatural slaughter.



2. DUNGEON KEEPER (Electronic Arts) Build dungeons, hoard gold, destroy do-gooders, and slap your evil minions around.

3. NIGHTMARE CREATURES (Activision) In this 3D fighting game, just ported from the PlayStation, you must try to survive in Victorian England, the ideal locale for Gothic horror and grotesque creatures.





4. POSTAL (Ripcord Games) It sounds like the Twilight Zone. You wake up thinking everyone's mad, but discover that it's actually *you* who's insane.

5. REALMS OF THE HAUNTING (Interplay) Shades of Hamlet, you'll have to avenge the wrong done to your late father with the help of those in the afterlife.

6. LEGACY OF KAIN (Activision) This game sucks, literally. As a vampire, you become an avenging warrior.

7. GABRIEL KNIGHT 2: THE BEAST WITHIN (Sierra) You'll have to deal with your own dark side, as well as the villains, in this old, but still outstanding, adventure game.

8. QUAKE (id Software) If facing a Shambler doesn't frighten you, some of the creepy environs within this game should.

9. DIABLO (Blizzard) This hack-and-slash role-playing game brings Gothic gargoyles and demons to life in rich, dark, shadowy crypts.

10. BLOOD (GT Interactive) If cults, voodoo, and undead punctuated by macabre mutilation is your cup of poison, this monster mash will float your corpse.

News Flash

▶▶▶Other news from **LucasArts**: The X-WING VS. TIE FIGHTER expansion pack, BALANCE OF POWER, will be available this fall. The add-on will have two campaigns—one Rebel and one Imperial—and between 30 and 40 new missions, including both single and multiplayer (up to eight players) levels. The highlight of the pack, though, will be the addition of 10 or 15 story-based missions, complete with cut-scenes, which were included after LucasArts received a substantial number of requests from fans. BALANCE OF POWER will be available for $29.95.

▶▶▶**BlueByte Software** recently released a press release to inform customers of a situation that may occur when attempting to load the company's game, EXTREME ASSAULT. Consumers using an older version of the virus detection program McAfee may get a false indication that there is a virus on their EXTREME ASSAULT CD. The press release serves to assure customers that there is, in fact, no virus on the CD; the problem is simply caused by a .WAV file with a similar byte pattern. If you use the latest version of McAfee (downloadable at **www.mcafee.com**), no virus will be reported.

No Boys Allowed

The First All-Female QUAKE Tourney Kicks Off With Over 160 Gamers

There are more and more female gamers these days, and as the recent All-Female Tournament (AFT) QUAKE tournament revealed, these women can certainly hold their own. Cohosted by TEN and Slamsite, the AFT was the brainchild of Internet consultant and avid QUAKE player Anna, a.k.a. NabeO. Anna has asked that we refrain from printing her last name, as she is receiving hate-mail from those opposed to the AFT. (One email even described her as the "Hitler of the Internet Community.")

Anna started playing QUAKE online with some of her male friends and, as a woman, faced a number of issues. After the game, she would often hang around and ask if there were any other girls playing. The responses—including "What are your measurements?" and "What's your bra size?"—were obviously not from women.



Tamra "Tease" Katic, an AFT contestant and a member of the CrackWhore Clan.

While playing, she came across another problem: When male players discovered she was a woman, they would often refuse to shoot her.

Assuming that other women were experiencing the same kind of frustrations, Anna started the AFT, which attracted more than 160 female QUAKE players. As it turned out, many women had been playing under androgynous names to avoid the very barriers Anna had come up against.



This is the female skin used in the AFT finals. NabeO and Tease say they would always choose a female avatar over a male, even if the guy had cooler weapons.

Girls Just Wanna Have Fun

So, what were the main differences playing in a women-only tournament? Tamra "Tease" Katic, a hairdresser who was introduced to QUAKE by her husband, says one of the notable differences was the lack of profanity. The worst line she's heard from a women is "I'm gonna frag your butt." Male players, on the other hand, "have their binded (sic) keys that say f*** you," she says. That's not to say that women don't take it seriously. Tamra was devastated when she was knocked out in one of the early rounds of the AFT. "It was a real personal experience because it was all women, and I wanted to be the best of all women," she says. Nonetheless, she continued to watch the rest of the tournament, cheering her fellow players on.

Anna agrees that women are more inclined to encourage one another. Women who are new to QUAKE, she says, don't feel bad about asking another female for help, but sometimes feel that if they asked a guy, they'd be made to feel stupid. The QUAKE women's forum, a place where, according to Anna, "women can go and feel free to ask questions," has grown substantially since the AFT was announced.

So, what does Anna think about the much-touted idea of creating less violent games to appeal to women? This HEXEN and DOOM alumna snorts in disgust, "QUAKE's not attractive because it's a *violent* game, it's attractive because it's a *good* game."

—Charlotte Panther

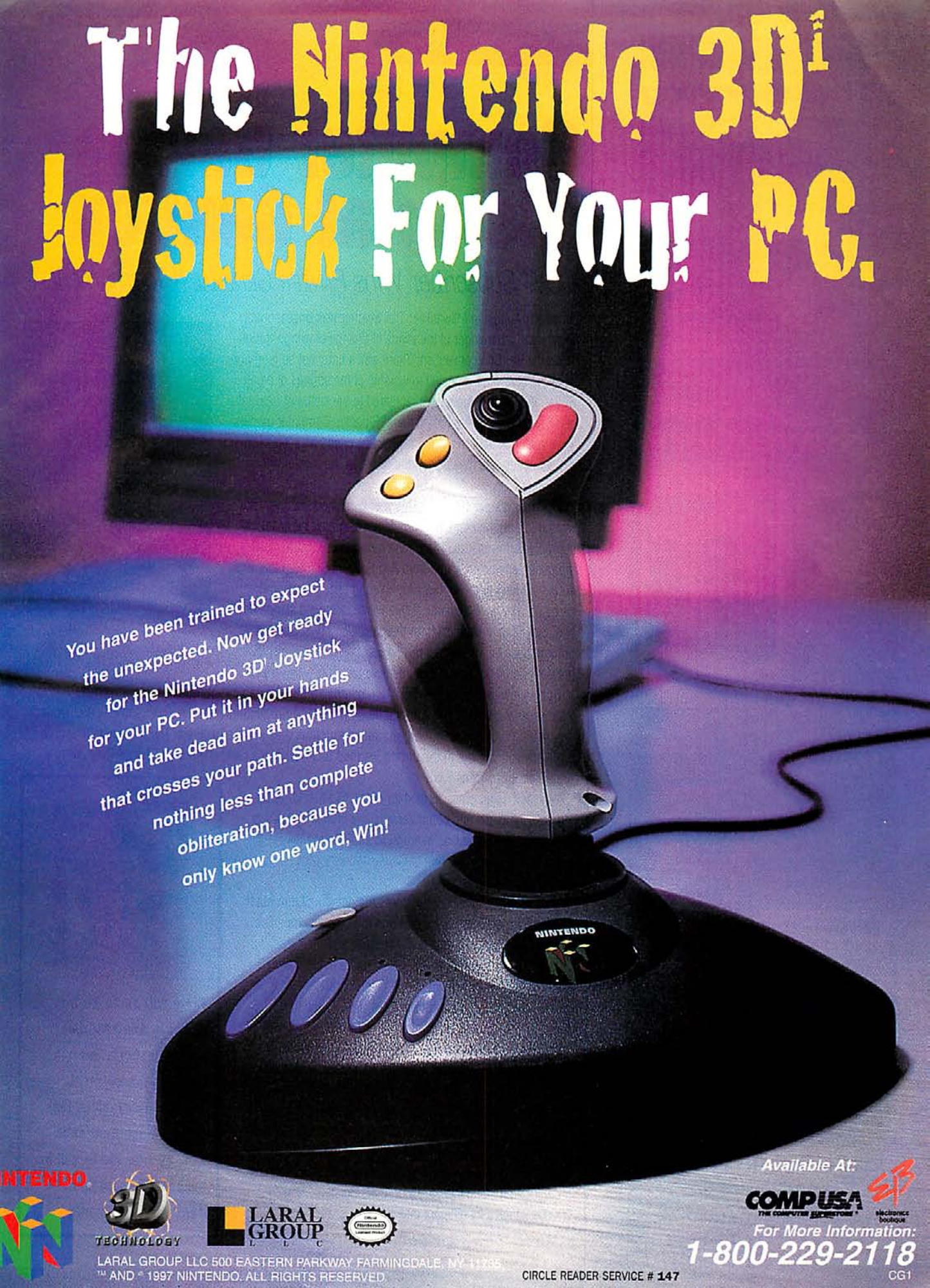
This just in. . .

As we go to press to with this story, we've just heard that the winner of the AFT is Kornelia, with KillCreek and LaEl following in second and third place. Congratulations Kornelia! For more information about the tournament and for tips from the contestants, head to **www.computergaming.com**.

Pipeline

10th Planet Bethesda	11/97
Aces: X-Fighters Sierra	Q1/98
AH-64D Longbow 2.0 Jane's Combat Sim	Win 97/98
Asheron's Call Turbine/Microsoft	Early 98
Baldur's Gate Bioware/Interplay	Win 97/98
Banshee 3DfX	Fall 97
Battlezone Activision	Early 98
Blade Runner Westwood	11/97
Close Combat II Microsoft	11/97
Curse of Monkey Island LucasArts	Win 97/98
Daikatana Ion Storm	11/97
Dominion 7th Level	Late 97
Earthsiege 3 Sierra	11/97
East Front TalonSoft	11/97
Epic Warhammer 40K: Fin Redemp SSI	Xmas 97
European Air War MicroProse	11/97
Extreme Tactics Media Station	11/97
Falcon 4.0 MicroProse	2/98
F-22 Raptor NovaLogic	Xmas 97
Fighter Duel 2 Infogrames	Spring 98
Fighter Squadron Activision	11/97
Final Fantasy VII Squaresoft	Early 98
Golgotha Crack.com	Early 98
Guardians: Agents of Justice MicroProse	11/97
Heavy Gear Activision	11/97
Hidden Wars Ronin	1/98
Half-Life Sierra/Valve	11/97
iA-10 Warthog Interactive Magic	Spring 98
Intel740 3D Chip Intel	Xmas 97
Interstate '77 Activision	Win 97/98
Jagged Alliance II Sir-Tech	4/98
Jane's F-15 EA/Jane's	Early 98
Joint Strike Fighter Eidos	1/98
King's Quest: Mask of Eternity Sierra	12/97
M-1 Tank Platoon II MicroProse	Mid 98
Madden NFL 98 EA Sports	Xmas 98
MAX II Interplay	Early 98
MechWarrior III MicroProse/FASA	Mid 98
MiG Alley Empire	Spring 98
Might & Magic VI New World/3DO	Win 97/98
Myth: The Fallen Lords Bungie	Win 97/98
NHL 98 EA Sports	11/97
Panzer General II SSI	11/97
Pax Imperia: Eminent Domain THQ	11/97
Populous: The Third Coming EA/Bullfrog	Early 98
Prey Apogee/3D Realms	Spring 98
Quake II id/Activision	11/97
Quest for Glory V Sierra	11/97
Reach for the Stars Microsoft/ SSG	Spring 98
Redguard Bethesda	Early 98
Return to Krondor 7th Level	Early 98
Screamin' Demons Activision	11/97
Skies SegaSoft	Mid 98
Siege Sir-Tech	Win 97/98
SimCity 3000 Maxis	Spring 98
Sin Activision	Early 98
Steel Panthers III SSI	Xmas 97
Su-27 Flanker 2.0 SSI	4/98
Tone Rebellion Logic Factory	11/97
Trespasser: Jurassic Park DreamWorks	Win 97/98
Ubik Cryo	11/97
Uprising Cyclone Studios	Late 97
WarBreeds Broderbund	Early 98
WarCraft Adventures Blizzard	12/97
Warhammer II: Dark Omen SSI	11/97
Wizardry VIII Sir-Tech	Mid 98
Zork: Grand Inquisitor Activision	11/97

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #146

Computer Games Rising at GenCon

CGW Subscriber Wins PANZER GENERAL *II Tournament*

Early August in Milwaukee: The weather was unseasonably cool, a harbinger of the winds of change blowing through the GenCon convention. There was a time, not so long ago, when gamers were expected to worship at the shrines of paper RPGs, and boardgamers were relegated to the status of peasants, barely worthy of setting foot in the TSR castle. Computer gamers were treated as an even lower form of life, often banished to small dungeonettes, lest they poison the minds of the faithful with their silicon heresies.

How things have changed. This year it seemed that everyone wanted to turn their famous—or infamous—paper game into a computer extravaganza. There were new games, like the sci-fi grand strategy online game from Red Sailboat Software that lacks even a working title—so they were offering prizes to whomever came up with the best name. There were several old standards as well, including a real blast from the past: *Chivalry & Sorcery*, brought back by the original design team, with all the medieval realism and half the calculator-intensive fat of the '70s version.



Winner of the PANZER GENERAL II tournament, *CGW* subscriber Matt Drew.

But even with all this activity, the traditional computer gaming companies had the edge. Westwood showcased the sumptuous graphics and production values of BLADE RUNNER and wowed the gaming crowd at GenCon every bit as much as they did the buyers at the E3 show. Of course, the many role-players in the throng warmed to Westwood's LANDS OF LORE II, just as they did to Activision's LEGACY OF KAIN.

Holistic Design group formed an interesting hybrid, pushing both the paper and computer versions of their EMPIRES OF THE FADING SUN, as well as in-progress shots from their upcoming computer version of Games Workshop's WARHAMMER: REDEMPTION.

But the most significant trend was the handful of computer gaming tournaments, sanctioned and run by the companies themselves. The most impressive of these was the PANZER GENERAL II event hosted by SSI, which had a better competitive field than several board and RPG tournaments.

The four finalists, Steve Strote, Matt Drew, Stephen B. Taylor, and Randy Porter, went to war in *Oak Ridge*, a PG II scenario that debuted at GenCon. Matt Drew, interestingly enough a *CGW* subscriber, emerged triumphant with a sizzling score of 2080. The trophy he received was quite impressive, incorporating a PG II logo with a *fledgrau* German WWII helmet and a to-scale "potato masher" grenade. SSI seemed very happy with the turnout and implied that there will be more official computer gaming tournaments in years to come. If other game companies follow in their footsteps, GenCon 2000 will look a lot different than this year's version.

—Terry Colemen



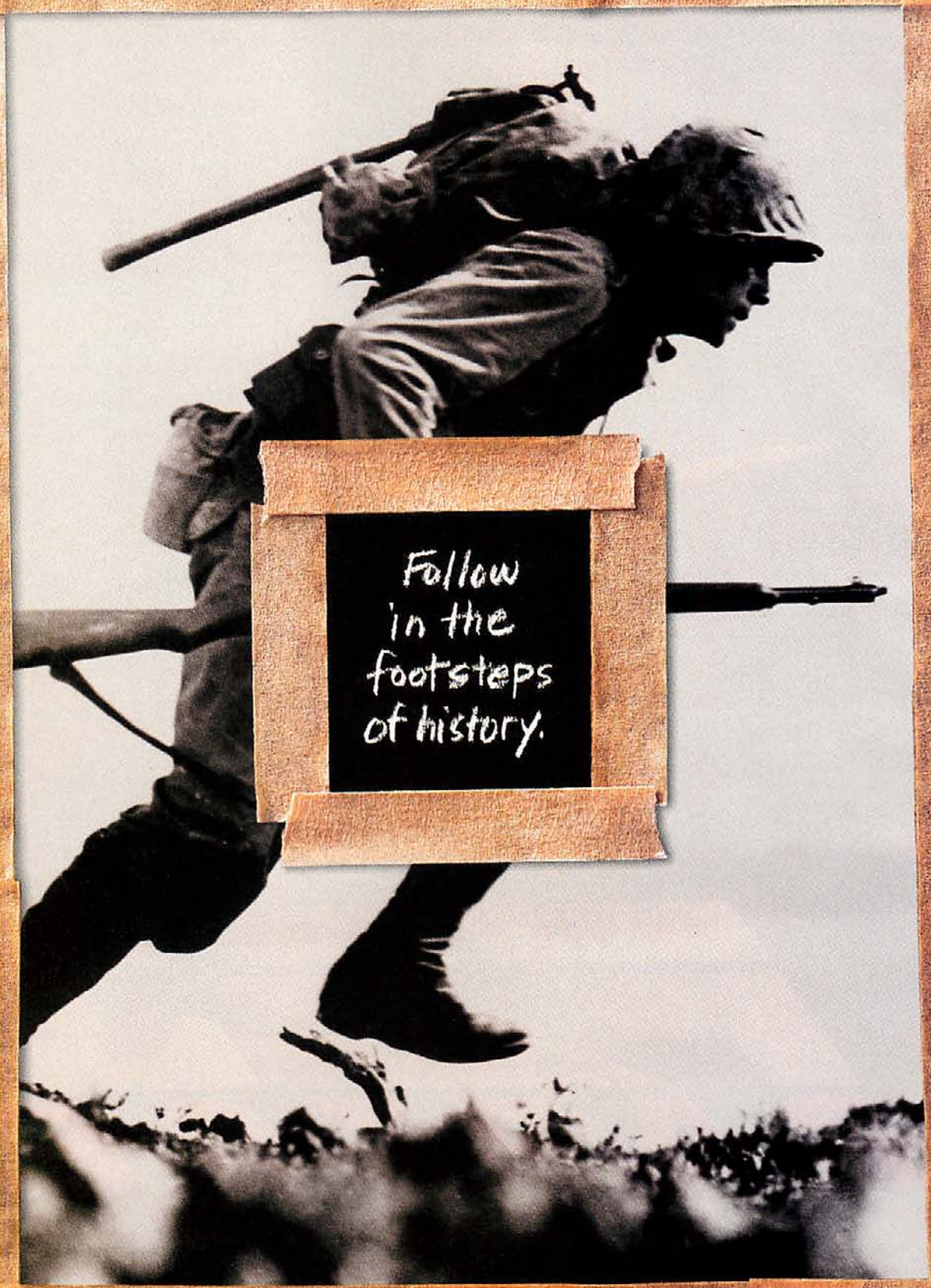
There will be no 3D Iron Works in READ.ME this month. Instead, you can find it in our colossal, 11-page 3D graphics feature, beginning on page 214. 3D Iron Works will be back in its usual spot, in READ.ME, next month.



CIRCLE READER SERVICE #109

Microsoft

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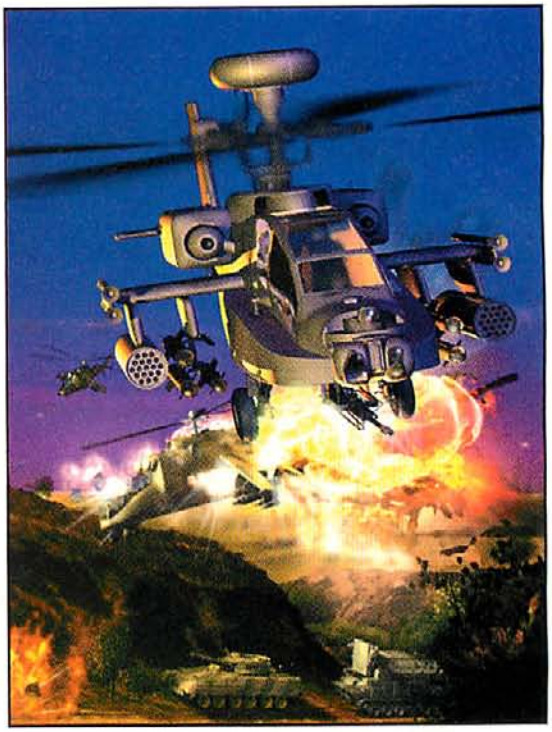


TODAY, WE'D LIKE TO SHOW YOU HOW NICELY THEY'VE GROWN UP.

Longbow Restrung

The Best Simulation Game From 1996 Is Getting Even Better

by Denny Atkin



Last year's AH-64D LONGBOW certainly made a splash. It not only won the *CGW* Premier Award for best simulation, but it also did well in a market that tends to ignore anything that doesn't involve fast-action dogfighting. Accessible to beginner pilots, but accurate enough to please the most hard-core, LONGBOW seemed to do almost everything right. But in their success, Andy Hollis and the Texas branch of Origin Skunkworks set a tough challenge for themselves in developing LONGBOW 2: How would they top a sim that everyone already thinks is "the best"?

MID-LIFE UPDATE

The original LONGBOW's acceptance is actually a testament to how well it was designed. Because despite its popularity and accolades, it was missing a number of elements that many experienced simulation gamers demand. The campaign, for instance, wasn't dynamic in nature, but instead consisted of prescripted missions. This wasn't as obvious a limitation as it is in many sims, due to the sheer number of missions and their nonlinearity, but, nevertheless, it left room for improvement. There were other missing features as well: no multiplayer support, no ability to fly in the Co-Pilot/Gunner (CP/G) position, and no individual ground troops (the latter two limitations were addressed on the FLASH POINT: KOREA add-on disc).

Those omissions gave the team some obvious issues to address in the next version, as did changes in the marketplace. Support for 3D cards is a must in today's simulation market, and Internet play is a big selling point for a small, but emphatic (and vocal) group of gamers. In addition, there were a number of minor features that the developers had to leave out of the original LONGBOW, due to time or PC performance constraints. Add in a year's worth of LONGBOW-player feedback and you have a significant list of potential improvements.

LONGBOW 2 is the culmination of the Skunkworks team's desire to address these wish lists—if the version I've been playing is any indication, Andy Hollis and team may be responsible for nearly as many smiles on Christmas morning as the guy in the red suit.

All the big-ticket items are there: a fully dynamic campaign, multiplayer support, mission editing, multiple helicopters, and support for the 3Dfx Voodoo 3D card. Add in a number of more subtle improvements, and it becomes evident that Hollis and company have another hit on their hands.

THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

The most significant change in LONGBOW 2 is in the missions you'll fly. Instant action and single missions are still there (you'll find more control in the single-



SPEEDY 3D Support for 3Dfx Voodoo graphics cards makes for cleaner graphics as well as faster frame rates.

Target Release Date: November 1997
Developer: Origin Skunkworks
Publisher: Jane's Combat Simulations



GOT A LIGHT? Dynamic lighting makes for dramatic missile firings and explosions, particularly at night.

mission setup, but things aren't dramatically different on this front), but the campaigns bear no resemblance to those in the first game.

LONGBOW 2 features two campaigns: *Fallen Crescent*, set in Azerbaijan, near its border with Iran and Iraq, and *Azure Rune*, set at the Army's National Training Center at Ft. Irwin, California.

Fallen Crescent is your typical, near-future localized conflict, with U.S. Army forces battling primarily Russian equipment. *Azure Rune*, however, takes a unique approach, simulating a large-scale Army training exercise. The difference here is that live weapons are fired, and opposing units do expose.

There are two setups for the *Azure Rune* campaign: Blue vs. Blue, and Blue vs. Red. In Blue vs. Blue, both forces use American equipment. In Blue vs. Red, the Blue side uses American hardware, while the Red side flies what appears to be Russian equipment. In real life, most of the "Russian" equipment flown at Ft. Irwin is actually American hardware that has undergone VISMOD, or visual modification. For instance, the "Hinds" flown in these exercises are actually UH-1 Hueys with Russian-style paint schemes and rather goofy-looking fake noses to give the helicopter a Hind-like profile. In LONGBOW 2, however, the VISMOD is more effective, as the designers chose to use the actual Russian equipment models instead of modeling the VISMOD equipment. While the Red team *looks* Russian, the performance of each unit matches its American counterpart. *Azure Rune*'s odd setup makes for perfect balance in multiplayer play, but the campaign should prove quite challenging in single-player mode as well.

CAREFUL PLANNING

Once you choose a campaign, you're off to the Mobile Mission Planning Cell (MMPC), a truck-mounted system used for tactical mission planning in the field. The primary interface here is a map that, at first glance, looks much like the mission planner in the original LONGBOW. A closer look, however, shows not only more detail, but also four sets of waypoints from four different FARPs (Forward Arming and Refueling Points). You're now able to task up to four flights of two helicopters.

Each time you complete a mission and return to the MMPC, you'll find new missions assigned for each available flight. You're free to modify these, altering waypoints, times on target, or even discarding missions completely and choosing your own targets.

The MMPC offers a number of functions to aid in planning a successful mission. Click the Rehearse button, for instance, and icons will move across through the waypoints relative to each helicopter's assigned speeds. This is useful for making sure everyone arrives on target at the appropriate time when you're setting up a coordinated attack. Another helpful feature is the Terrain Profiler, which gives you a side view showing terrain altitude around your target. It also shows ranges for each weapon, aiding in planning bob-up attacks.

Choose the type of helicopter you want to take on the mission and you're good to go. The campaign is fully dynamic, so you'll return from the mission to find the MMPC updated with troop movements that reflect the performance of your own teams, and you'll see evidence of previous missions each time you fly.

You can also enable resource management in the game, setting replacement rates for lost helicopters as well as resupply rates for missiles and rockets. There's also a "fog of war" setting, which may prevent you from receiving accurate information about enemy forces in your briefings. Finally, you can choose all day missions, all night missions, or a mixture; similarly, you can set visibility as always good, always poor, or random.



DOG WILL HUNT Virtual cockpit technology makes it easier to track targets in combat.

THE RIGHT TOOLS

The original LONGBOW let you fly only the AH-64D Longbow or the earlier AH-64A model. LONGBOW 2 adds two new craft to the mix: the UH-60 Blackhawk utility helicopter and the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior


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WHABOOM
FOR SLATER, EVENING THE SCORE WASN'T VENGEANCE, IT WAS SIMPLE JUSTICE.
BRAM BRAM BRAM
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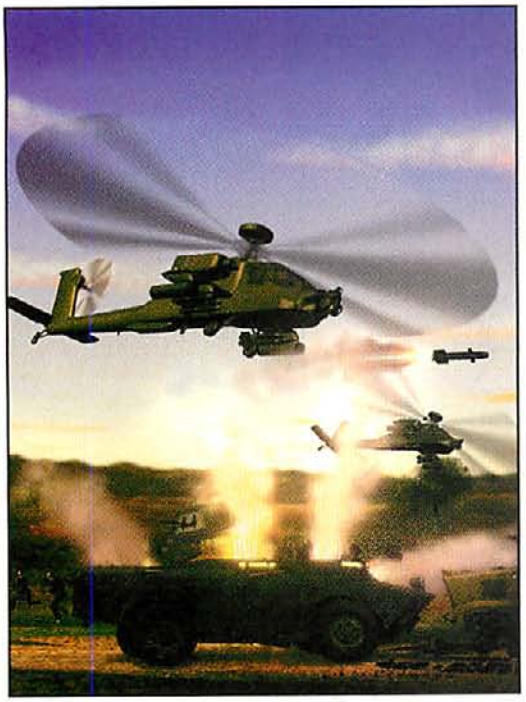






3-D Accelerator Card Required.

CIRCLE READER SERVICE #284



reconnaissance chopper. Which helicopter you choose is dependent upon the kind of mission you're tasked with. When raining death and destruction down upon the enemy is the goal, you'll take a Longbow with an Apache as your teammate. The Blackhawk is the obvious choice if your mission involves inserting troops behind enemy lines or another duty which requires cargo capacity. The Kiowa comes into play when you need a fast, agile reconnaissance chopper that can get in and out without being detected.

Inside the Longbow or Apache cockpit, you won't find much changed from the previous game. This doesn't come as a complete surprise, given the level of detail present the first time around. The most noticeable improvement is the addition of a virtual, panning cockpit which you can use to gain a level of quick situational awareness not obtainable with the sim's fixed left/right/forward views.

The Blackhawk is the least agile of the sim's craft, and thus it's the easiest to fly. The real fun in this helicopter will likely be for the gunner, who gets to fire a pivot-mounted machine gun out the side door. What better position to put your QUAKE-playing buddy in during a multiplayer fray?

Conversely, the Kiowa Warrior is the most nimble of the trio. And because its TADS sensors are mounted on the top of the rotor mast, it's the sensor platform of choice when you want to sneak up on the enemy and see what they're up to without being detected. Just pop up high enough to get the TADS over the top of the ridge you're hiding behind. Because it has a nose-mounted TADS, the Longbow must be completely exposed to use the system.

ENGINE TUNE-UP

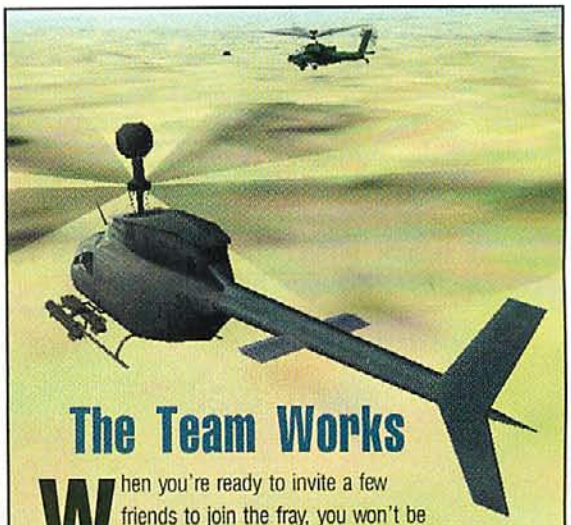
LONGBOW 2 features a completely rebuilt graphics engine. The polygon mesh that makes up the terrain is now four times as detailed. This means that you'll see many more subtle depressions in the ground terrain, especially at Ft. Irwin. This also makes for many more ridges and gullies to use for terrain-masking purposes. Objects are more detailed as well, especially the helicopters.

New special effects abound. Fire off a Hellfire at night and you'll see dramatic, dynamic lighting. Transparent smoke trails stream from missiles and rockets, and tanks moving across the terrain kick up dust. One of the most impressive effects is the accurate portrayal of the night-vision system. Because the Longbow pilot actually wears a night-vision monocle, he doesn't actually see an all-green image. The dark area outside the helicopter is mostly green because of the IR view the monocled eye receives, but the cockpit interior is still its usual color, albeit with a slight green tinge.

LONGBOW 2 supports the 3Dfx Voodoo chipset, and is absolutely dazzling on that card; support for other 3D cards is being considered, but specifics haven't yet been announced. Even if you don't have a 3D card, you can still take advantage of all the new graphics effects if your PC has the horsepower to run them in software. The 3D hardware-challenged will especially appreciate the new software filtering technology that the JANE'S F-15 team at Origin Skunkworks Baltimore provided for LONGBOW 2. This scatters the pixels when you're flying nap-of-the-earth and eliminates the "giant pixel block" effects seen at low-altitude in LONGBOW.

Of all the major user requests for improvements, only one major suggestion didn't make it in: trees. The LONGBOW 2 team did experiment with adding individual trees and treelines, but they ran into two problems: They couldn't come up with an effect that looked as good as the new terrain, and in what turned out to be the bigger snag (due to performance), there was no way to do the trees on systems without 3D graphics hardware. With the built-for-multiplayer design of LONGBOW 2, you couldn't have one player playing with trees enabled and another without because the treeless pilot would have a dramatic line-of-sight advantage.

Oh well, they had to leave *something* for LONGBOW 3.



The Team Works

When you're ready to invite a few friends to join the fray, you won't be limited to a simple aerial deathmatch. LONGBOW 2 will have full support for its dynamic campaigns (as well as single missions) in multiplayer mode. You simply choose which of the helicopters each player will occupy; the campaign is structured around four flights of two helicopters each. Players can each man their own craft, or they can share a helicopter as pilot and CP/G. Eight players are supported for network play, but due to Internet latency restrictions only four players will likely be supported for TCP/IP play. The *Fallen Crescent* campaign is cooperative-only, but the *Azure Rune* campaign can be played in cooperative or antagonistic mode.

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KILLER 3D PERFORMANCE[1]





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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #106

The Baron



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Red Baron II™



CIRCLE READER SERVICE #361

Target Release Date: First Quarter 1998
Developer: Activision
Publisher: Activision

Head Into Battle

Activision Resurrects the Old Arcade Name in an Innovative Action-Strategy Hybrid

by Elliott Chin

Gaming veterans will know the name BATTLEZONE, the old Atari game that was incredibly popular in the arcades. Back in those days, games were still stuck in 2D side-scrolling purgatory, but BATTLEZONE was a little different, and very fun. Its first-person perspective and wire-frame graphics were, at the time, amazing.

Nearly two decades later, Activision has decided to resurrect BATTLEZONE, purchasing the license in the hopes of creating another ground-breaking title that's a little different—and a whole lot of fun. Those who think this is merely an update of the old BATTLEZONE will be very surprised. Though the name is the same and many enemies make reappearances, this game goes far beyond the original. In many respects, BATTLEZONE typifies a completely new type of game—one that mixes action and strategy together in a unique blend.

Activision's BATTLEZONE is an action-strategy hybrid. You play from a first-person perspective, taking direct action against your enemies, and spewing laser and bullet fire indiscriminately, but you also have a base to command, troops to create and deploy, and resources to harvest. We've already heard about hybrids, specifically Cyclone's and 3DO's URPISING, a first-person-perspective strategy game. But where URPISING is clearly a strategy game played from a first-person perspective, BATTLEZONE is more action-oriented and less definable. Andrew Goldman, the director on the project, says BATTLEZONE is probably "70 percent action, 30 percent strategy."

SPACE RACE

The story in the game is refreshing and clever. It turns out the space race wasn't really about national pride, but was a race against the Soviets to find an alien bio-metal that could be fashioned into deadly weapons. The Apollo mission was actually designed to establish a base on the moon to mine this bio-metal, and subsequent missions went to Mars and beyond, without the people of Earth ever knowing.

The game takes place in the 1960s, with you as the U.S. commander of the space program. You must first establish a base on the moon, using primitive spacecraft that are nothing more than souped-up airplanes. As the game progresses, you discover more bio-metal and integrate it with your own weapons and vehicles, creating vessels and armaments that become increasingly otherworldly and futuristic, until they shed all vestiges of earthly origin and become truly alien.

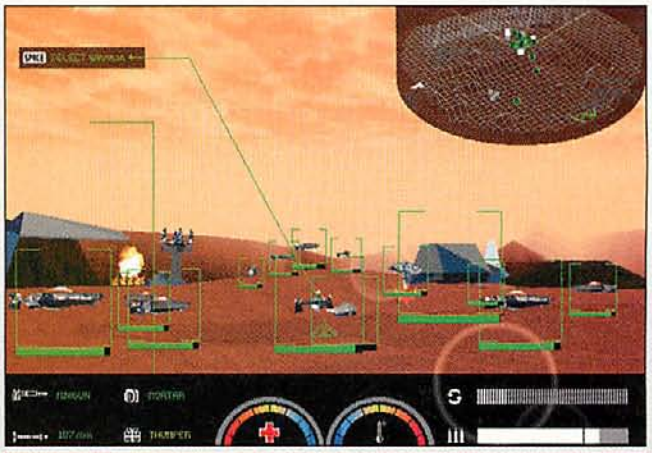
Throughout much of the game, the Soviets are your enemy. Even during your first mission to the moon, they will harass you, and they will battle you on the moon, Mars, and beyond. As the plot develops, however, you discover that the Soviets are the least of your worries—they will even join forces with you to save Earth from a danger unleashed by your use of bio-metal.

LIFTOFF

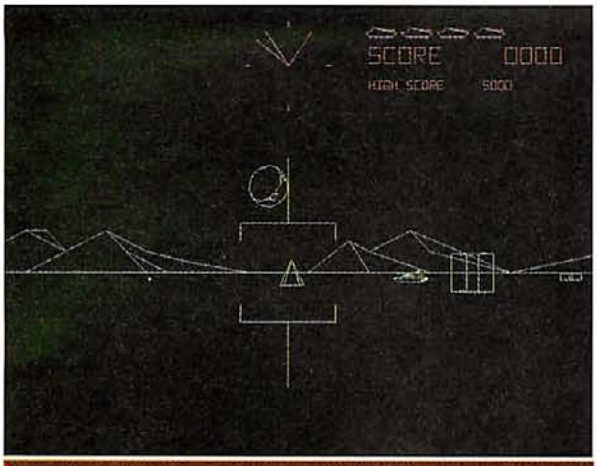
The combination of action and strategy gameplay will be unfamiliar to many gamers at



BREAKING APART BATTLEZONE is an action-strategy hybrid, combining fast, first-person action with strategic components.



CALL TO ARMS In various missions, you'll command a sizable army to tackle the Soviets and alien threats on a variety of planets.



DÉJÀ VU Here is a look at the original 1980 BATTLEZONE, which provided the name and inspiration for Activision's remake.

first, but neither component is too difficult to master if you take them separately. The game plays strictly from the first-person perspective. From this view, you pilot your vessel—a converted jet with highly maneuverable thrusters for agile turns and side-to-side movement. In terms of gameplay, the designers wanted gamers to be able to move as quickly as they do in QUAKE. That meant instantaneous response when you moved your joystick or mouse. This is opposed to INTERSTATE '76, in which you had to maneuver a clunky car that would turn only in wide arcs.

The comparison is apt because BATTLEZONE uses a much-enhanced version of the INTERSTATE '76 engine. The frame rate is faster, with a higher polygon count and richer textures for greater detail, and the engine will also support 3D acceleration right out of the box. While the graphics look good, they are preliminary. Activision will be optimizing the speed and polishing the look, including that of the bio-metal, which at present is only minimally rendered.

The accelerated frame rate and higher detail are all the more impressive when you consider that Activision has added a few, new competing graphic elements to the engine, which increases the taxing of the engine's speed. There are the standard icons for weapons and health along the bottom, but also a command bar at the top of the screen for strategic commands and a detailed 3D topographical map on the right of the screen, which is incredibly versatile. The topographical grid-map shows the elevation of all the terrain in your radar's circumference, as well as your cone of sight, enemy locations, and the position of your camp and units. When you issue commands by using the top bar, a pointer highlights the selected units on the topographical map. Together, the two tools make the command of troops and the issuance of orders much easier to execute than in UPRISING.

LET'S PLAY

As the commander, you'll have a variety of weapons at your disposal, including machine guns, rockets, mines, and an impressive earthquake weapon that, when fired, causes a huge shock wave to ripple through the ground, damaging everything in its path. If your craft should get damaged or run out of ammo, you can contact your headquarters and order a drop shipment of health and ammo to your location. If your craft is destroyed, you can radio for your wingman to meet you, at which point you jump in and assume control of his vehicle. Of course, while you wait, you're vulnerable to enemy craft. Fortunately, you are still armed while on foot, and are able to shoot with a less-powerful laser.

EASY PICKINGS

For most of the game, you'll be jetting around, blasting at your enemies, but you will also have to remember to assign vehicles to harvest pockets of bio-metal. This will require building scavengers to harvest the bio-metal and escort vehicles to protect them. You will also need to build support vehicles and structures at your first base to service your entire operation and the recycler, which builds most of your structures.

You easily execute all this via the command bar at the top of the screen. A set of numbers there corresponds to different units available

In Goldman's Own Words

Much of BATTLEZONE is still in the early development stage, but we did manage to talk BATTLEZONE's director, Andrew Goldman, into giving us an idea of what the final product will be like.

CGW: How would you describe the gameplay in BATTLEZONE?

Goldman: You command your army from the battlefield. You get the intense combat of an action game, combined with the complete strategic control you get in a real-time strategy game, without ever leaving the first-person-perspective combat. We call it combat strategy. The original BATTLEZONE was the first 3D game ever. When we decided to remake BATTLEZONE, we wanted to make it every bit as innovative as the original, and I think we've done that.

CGW: What exactly is the bio-metal you harvest?

Goldman: Bio-metal is an amazing raw material that actually "remembers" its previous forms. It's kind of like Stretch Armstrong—you can change its shape, but over time it reverts to its original form.

The United States and the Soviet Union both discovered it after a meteor shower over the Bering Strait in 1957. This was the real cause for Kennedy's speech about making it to the moon—the space race was actually a cover-up for our drive to win the arms race.

CGW: What enemies do you fight in the game?

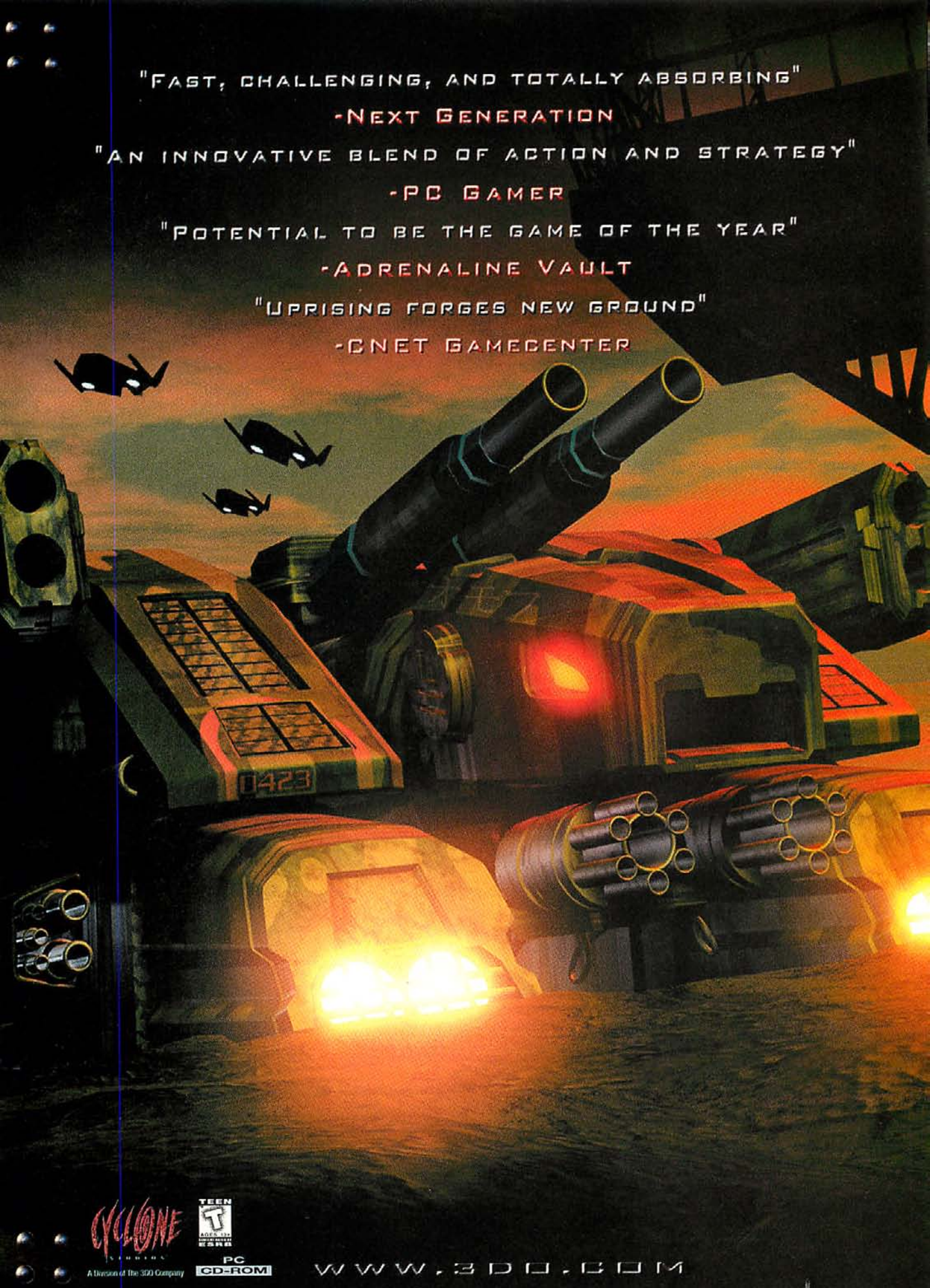
Goldman: Well, American forces clash with the Soviets, and that's just the beginning....

CGW: What weapons will be available to you?

Goldman: You start with cannons, rockets, mortars, and mines. As you discover more of the bio-metal, your weapons get increasingly exotic.

CGW: How do you acquire new weapons or technology?

Goldman: You acquire all of your new weapons by discovering elements from the alien race that created the bio-metal. You have a reconnaissance camera that allows you to take pictures of objects you find in the game world. Once you've got the picture, you and your engineers can learn about the object and


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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #113



GRIZZLY TANK

to command: offensive, defensive, utility, and recycler. Once you select a type, you get a pointer to each of the appropriate vehicles on the topographical grid-map, as well as a hotkey for selecting them. (For example, you press 1 for the offensive vehicles and then get three pointers that, in turn, go to each of your wingmen.) Once you select a vehicle, a number of commands become available, again accessible by hotkeys displayed on the current menu.

You can also select a unit by moving your cursor over it and hitting an appropriate hotkey. Whereas the command bar allows you to select all vehicles of a given type, the cursor method lets you hail any nearby vehicles for immediate command.

The BATTLEZONE interface for commanding units is actually very simple to use, with a minimal learning curve, since it depends on a simple tree of hotkey commands.

BATTLEZONE has great potential. The strategic gameplay is easy to grasp, and it's compelling. In fact, you will need to use your units strategically to win. Activision also plans to flesh out the story, both in cut-scenes and during gameplay. With all these elements, Activision has its work cut out for it trying to integrate the pieces seamlessly into a fun package. But from what we've seen and played, the designers seem to be on the right track. Early next year, we'll see if this mix of action and strategy—wrapped in an intuitive interface and compelling story—creates that ultimate battle zone.



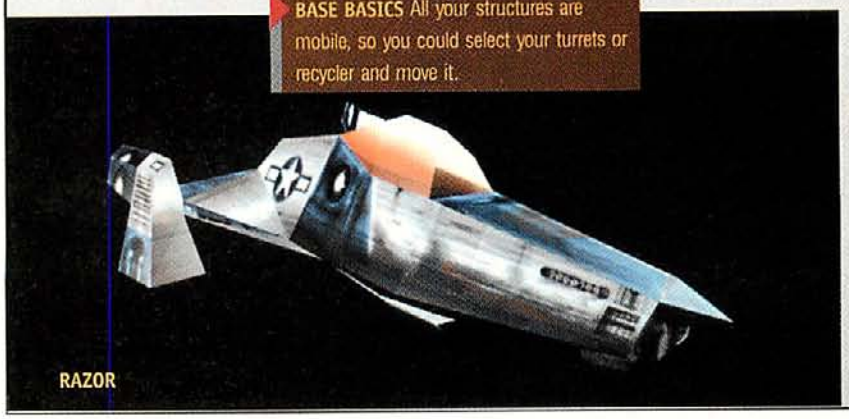
BY YOUR COMMAND Select a unit via the hotkeys at the top and you get a pointer to the unit and a list of available commands.



IN YOUR FACE The strategic component is easy to manage with the hotkey-oriented top command bar and topographical map.



BASE BASICS All your structures are mobile, so you could select your turrets or recycler and move it.



RAZOR

how to apply it to the war effort. You'll also have missions in which you fight to control key alien relics.

CGW: What will this new researched technology allow you to do?

Goldman: You'll continue to get better vehicles and weapons. Improved technology will open new avenues for strategic gameplay and cooler destruction.

CGW: What vehicles will gamers be able to pilot?

Goldman: The gamer can get into almost any vehicle—all the different kinds of tanks, artillery, mine layers, turrets, utility vehicles, and the like. They all have unique functions and capabilities. As a part of the game, you and other pilots will have to eject from damaged vehicles. When you're out of luck and on foot, you'll need to orchestrate your own rescue, or, of course, use your sniper rifle to get a new ride.

CGW: What about the mission structure? Will the missions be goal-oriented, as in INTERSTATE '76?

Goldman: The opening missions of the single-player campaign will introduce you to the game in a structured and easy-to-learn fashion. Quickly, however, the missions will open up. Gamers will execute their own strategies in a wide-open game world, just like real-time strategy games.

CGW: In which environments and planets will you play?

Goldman: The game's environments are truly amazing. We've developed an awesome terrain system using real surface textures taken by various planetary explorers. For example, when you drive around Mars, it's really Mars, straight from the *Pathfinder* photos. You'll also be able to create whole new worlds using the included tool kit that runs within the game engine.

CGW: What sort of multiplayer support will there be?

Goldman: We'll have extensive multiplayer support featuring Activision's Internet Gaming Service, LAN, modem, and null-modem battlefests. You'll be able to play straight deathmatches, competitive, and cooperative combat strategy battles. You'll even be able to play some of the missions in the single-player campaign with other people.

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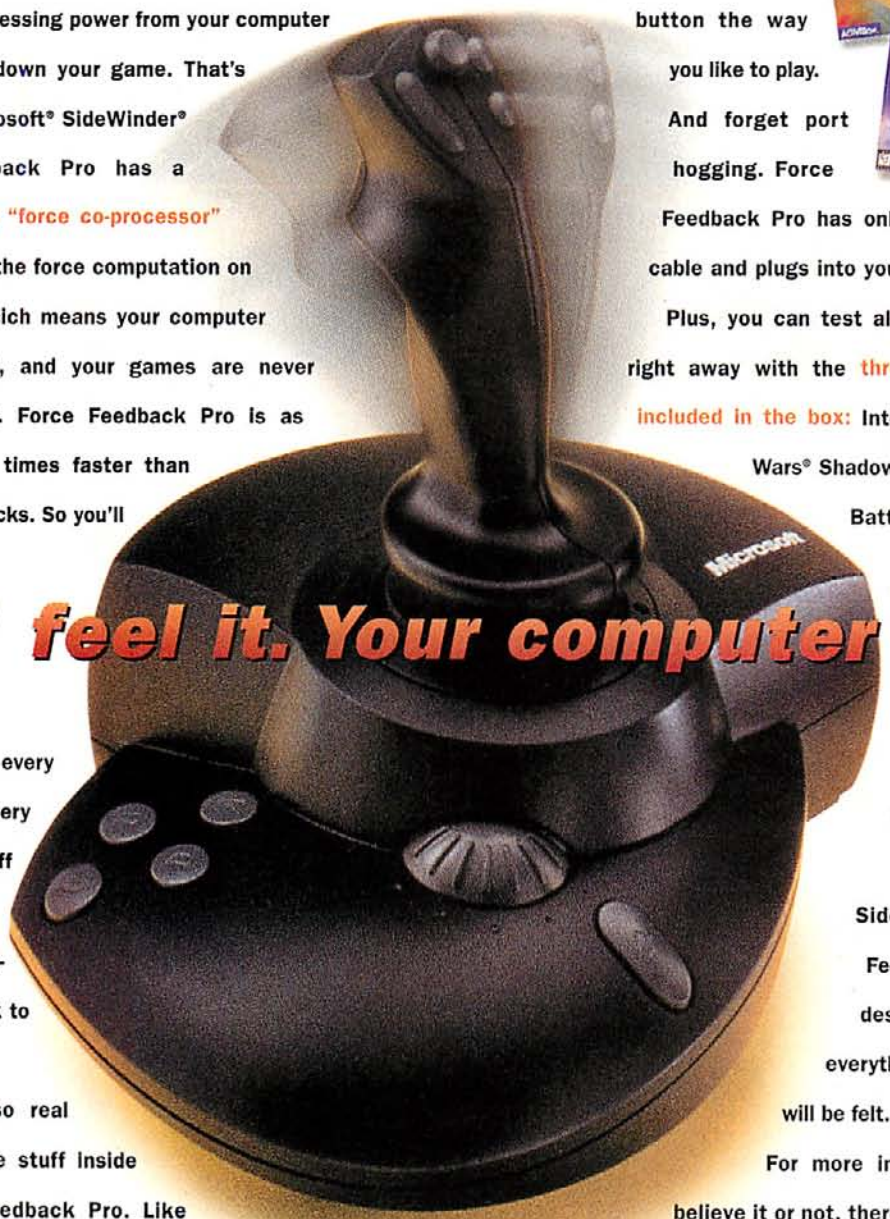


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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #**243**

Target Release Date: November 1997
Developer: LucasArts
Publisher: LucasArts

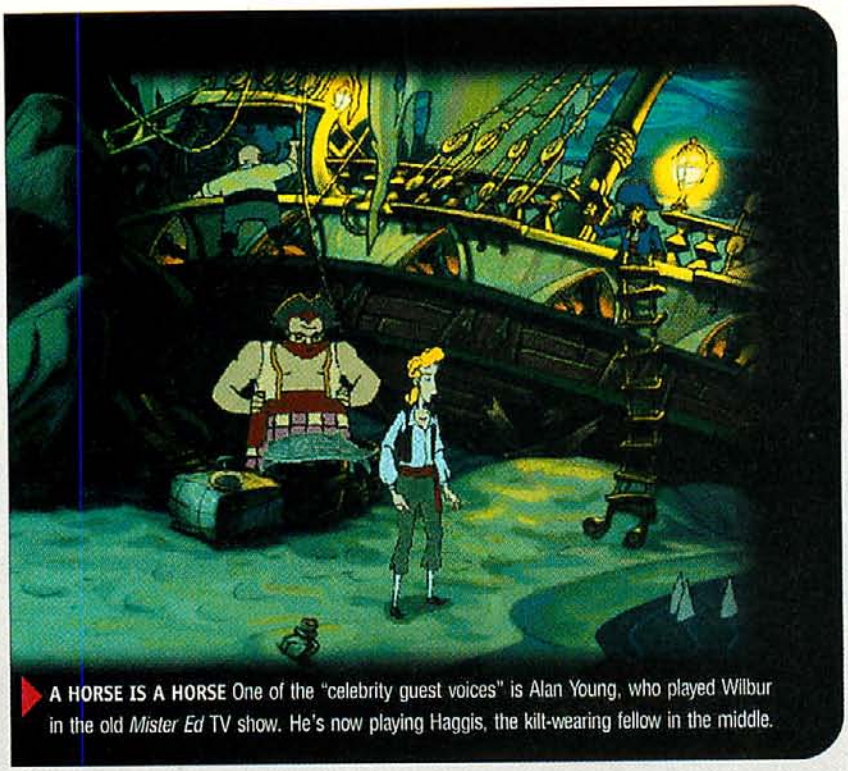
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Guybrush Returns in the Third Chapter of the Hilarious MONKEY ISLAND Series

by Thierry Nguyen

"Hi! My name's Guybrush Threepwood! I want to become a pirate!" These were the opening words of the game that hooked me on gaming. With its beautiful graphics, sharp writing, and excellent gameplay, THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND entranced me and convinced me to buy a PC. It was the first game I bought, and when the sequel came out I bought that, too. MONKEY ISLAND 2 lived up to the standards set by the original, with all the witty dialogue and clever story I'd come to expect. Now, nearly six years later, LucasArts has finally completed the trilogy with THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND.

Why did it take so long to make CURSE? After all, the first one came out in 1990, and the second followed only two years later. The delay owes to a combination of long development cycles and a deliberate decision by LucasArts not to launch another MONKEY ISLAND for a while. It also didn't help that Ron Gilbert, creator and designer of the first two games, left LucasArts (he's now working on TOTAL ANNIHILATION for CaveDog.) Luckily, longtime LucasArts developers Jonathan Ackley and Larry Ahern picked up the torch, developing the new game in their free time over the last two years.



A HORSE IS A HORSE One of the "celebrity guest voices" is Alan Young, who played Wilbur in the old *Mister Ed* TV show. He's now playing Haggis, the kilt-wearing fellow in the middle.

FLASHIER PIRATE HATS

The new game's graphics technique is a significant departure from both earlier titles. Rather than continue with the rotoscoped characters used in the earlier MONKEY ISLANDS or THE DIG, CURSE uses the cartoonlike animation style of FULL THROTTLE or DAY OF THE TENTACLE. Thanks to six years of technological advancements, the new art is a huge improvement over the older games. With lushly painted backgrounds and well-animated characters, island paradises seem more vibrant, while voodoo temples seem more ominous. Some old-time fans may disagree, but from what I saw, the new look of the characters completely fits the theme of the game.

In addition to the new look, there is a new multimedia glitz. Expect a number of cinematic scenes that serve as transitional points in the game. Ahern explains that they wanted to show some of the scenes that they were never able to include in previous games. "We remembered wondering what happened in MONKEY ISLAND when you arrived on Monkey Island," he says. "Sure, it said you had a storm, but you never saw it. Here's our chance to show you what happened so you know the

deal." Other visual touches include such details as seeing your reflection when you walk by mirrors.

The graphics may have changed, but the LucasArts take on voice-overs has not. Authentic-sounding voice talent has long been a LucasArts hallmark, although the company tends to use more unknowns than celebrities. CURSE will feature a smattering of known talent—Gary Coleman as a Lemonade Stand Boy and Alan Young, who played Wilbur in the *Mister Ed* TV show, as a fellow named Haggis—but don't count on recognizing the voices of Guybrush, Elaine, and LeChuck.

SWASHBUCKLING GAMEPLAY

Along with classic adventure-game fare, expect a few FULL THROTTLE-type action sequences, such as a fun, arcade-style ship battle. Reminiscent of SID MEIER'S PIRATES!, you first have to make passes and fire cannons at each other. Once one ship has sunk, you will automatically board the enemy pirate's ship. Then, you'll engage in a sword fight with the other pirate captain. But while PIRATES! had you pressing keys, CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND employs the classic "insult-sword-fighting" pioneered in MONKEY ISLAND. That famous sequence was an absolute must for Ahern and Ackley, and they have brought it back with style.

Of course, if you're truly all thumbs when it comes to action sequences, you can always change the game mode on the fly to "Pathetically Easy to the Point of Click and Win" (not the actual name, but close to it). So even if you do foray into some action gaming, you can turn it off at any time and concentrate more on brainwork than reflexes.

And you'll definitely be needing that brain. "We thought THE DIG would take a while," said Ackley, "and then people came on the Internet and whined about finishing it in two days, so we made a CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND Mega Monkey difficulty level just for people like them." The game is huge, encompassing at least two large islands (each about the size of MONKEY ISLAND 2) along with a lengthy ship segment in the middle, and bits and pieces of other places.

A huge game world calls for nonlinearity, which is a godsend because you're bound to get stuck in many of the puzzles. "We wanted people to be able to try something else in the event that they get stuck, rather than get frustrated and never play again," said Ahern. Puzzles range from the typical "Open the locked door" puzzle to the unique "Duel the master duelist with a banjo" puzzle. Expect more than 30 hours of play when the game ships in November.

I'M YOUR FATHER'S COUSIN'S ROOMMATE'S DOG-WALKER

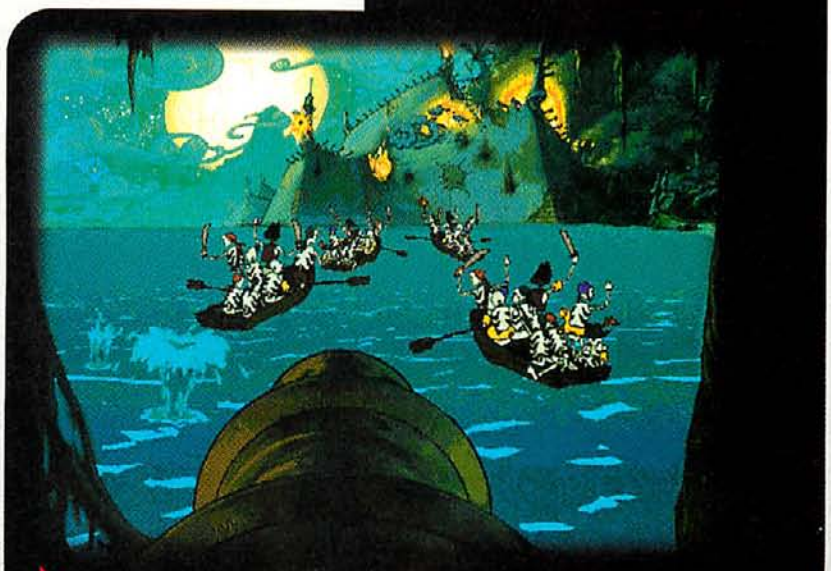
Of course, there is the nagging question, "What's the deal with the ending in MONKEY ISLAND 2?" At last you'll find out, as bits and pieces of the story behind the ending will be reconstructed throughout the new game. Ahern and Ackley have thought of every possible thread (such as "what happened to Young Lindy the Cabin Boy?") and tie it all together in the end. Gamers will have the option of hearing the explanation or not—new players, you can just refuse and get on with the game.

Those of you who have played the demo already know that Wally the Cartographer is back. Expect, also, to see the Voodoo Priestess again, and more powerful than you ever imagined. LucasArts had no *official* statement on on whether Stan would reappear, but I would be sorely disappointed not to see him for a third round. As to other details, Ackley says, "This won't be a major spoiler, but expect a *huge* supernatural showdown, followed by a bizarre, whup-ass ending."

Those who have been worried that the loss of Ron Gilbert and others of the original design team would hurt the MONKEY ISLAND series can rest easy—Ahern and Ackley, from what we've seen, have lived up to their predecessors' achievements. They've managed to retain some fundamentals of the earlier games (dialogue trees with no penalty for amusing answers) but have dramatically updated the series. THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND looks to be one of the best adventure games to ship this winter. For Guybrush Threepwood, it should be a triumphant return.



YOU TALKIN' TO ME? THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND combines good gameplay with beautiful animation and background art.



CANNONS AWAY! One of the early arcade sequences in the game has you firing cannons in order to dispatch a good portion of LeChuck's undead crew.

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"It brings bad things to life"
– Computer Gaming World, ★★★★½

"Wonderfully evil and wickedly addictive"
– PC Gamer, 90%

"Fiendishly good"
– Computer and Net Player, 10/10

"Hell is bubbling out of your PC."
– Happy Puppy

"The bad guys have more fun."
– Newsweek

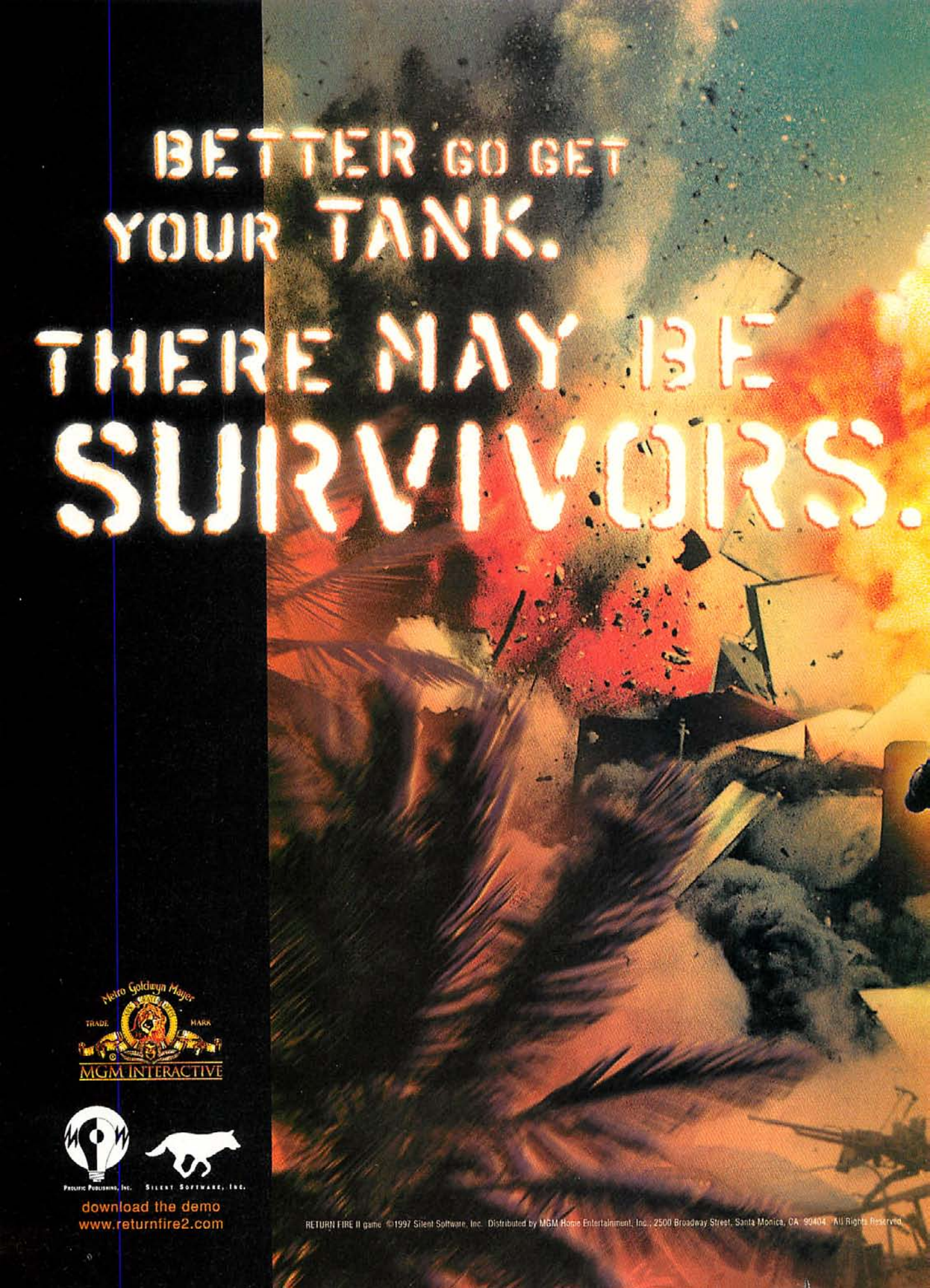


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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #114

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RETURN FIRE II

CIRCLE READER SERVICE #103

Target Release Date: October 1997
Developer: Impressions
Publisher: Sierra

MOM Meets HOMM

Lords of Magic Conjures Potent Mix for Strategists

by Johnny L. Wilson

Play the Lords of Magic demo on this month's CG-ROM.

Grind elements of Master of Magic, Heroes of Might & Magic, and Lords of the Realm into the game-design crucible. Sprinkle the mix with beautiful SVGA graphics and an eerie soundtrack. Add murky elements of narrative and role-playing that provide a rich purlieu to the gameplay. Then, drink deeply from a most mesmerizing hybrid that looks to be greater than the sum of its parts. Imagine the arcane research possibilities of MOM mixed with the movement system of HOMM. Then, consider an upgraded diplomatic and combat module à la LOR. Such is Lords of Magic, Sierra's latest and, perhaps, finest product out of the Impressions unit.

The overall campaign pits the gamer's character against an Ultimate Bad Guy named Balkoth. Balkoth has gained possession of the obligatory object of power and, as one might suspect in a background story for a strategy game that requires diplomacy, strategy, and tactics, has upset the balance between the so-called free peoples of this fictional world called Urak. Naturally, the gamer as hero has to redress this chaotic wrong, and it will require all of the diplomacy, tactics, and resource management which the gamer can muster in order to accomplish the feat.

THIS MAGIC FOMENT

Lords of Magic starts with the stripped-down basic character class of early role-playing games. As in Diablo, today's tribute to early hack-and-slash games, gamers choose to play a warrior, wizard, or thief. However, gameplay quickly diverges from there. Instead of being *merely* a warrior, wizard, or thief, gamers will choose to serve Earth, Air, Water, Fire, Chaos, Order, Life, or, after winning the game in the service of one of these, try serving Death as the evil Balkoth himself. If that sounds vaguely reminiscent of MOM, it is. Even spell research is reminiscent of the classic game. However, the major difference is that requiring you to win via another path before playing in Death's service keeps gamers from immediately jumping to the dark side and invoking powerful Death magic from the start (as many of us did in MOM). It also means that the Death campaign can be set up to be much tougher than those in which you serve other forces.

The research tree for magic is also much deeper than that in MOM. Not only does the game feature 120 different spells, but some of those spells actually modify the terrain in a dynamic way. Plus, any character in the game can wield magic via the 150 different artifacts to be discovered in the course of the game. As in HOMM, finding and using artifacts can really make or break your attempt to liberate or, in the case of Balkoth, enslave the fictional world of Urak.

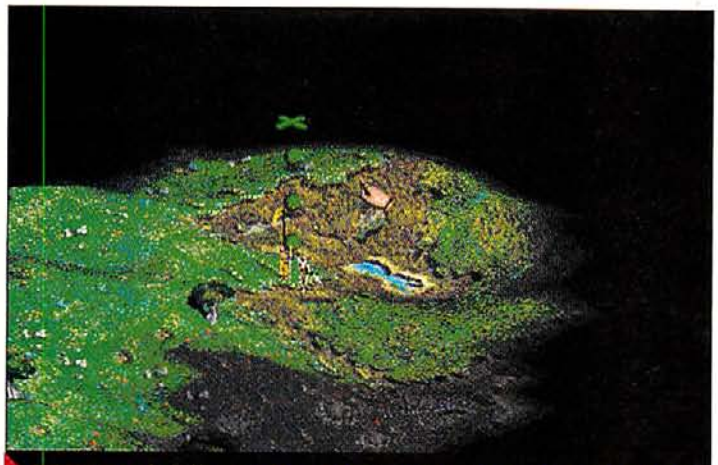


WHEEL OF FORTUNE This screen allows you to choose the power you will serve: Life, Death, Air, Water, Fire, Earth, Chaos, or Order.

MAGICAL HISTORY TOUR

Strategic movement in LORDS OF MAGIC is handled in turn-based sequences much like movement in HOMM. You start with a party composed of yourself and one initiate (follower). Click on the party and double-click on the map where you want them to go. The party will immediately move the length allowable in that turn, and then you either click to end the turn or move to deal with another party. If you encounter another party, clicking atop them will allow you either to enter negotiation, trade, or combat with that party. If you find a fascinating ruin, cave, fortress, or edifice, double-clicking on that will cause the party to enter it and move to the tactical screen.

The tactical screen is where all real-time combat takes place. However, the game is paused when the tactical screen first appears so that you do have a chance to issue instructions to individual troops before the real-time combat begins. After that, it's too late. Since your success or failure within the game depends on keeping your hero alive, you will immediately appreciate the fact that the initiate AI (the routines which control your party) are reasonably intelligent in terms of DEFENDING your hero. Of course, as in most real-time games, it will require your intervention to successfully attack. You can choose to use the "A" (attack) and "D" (defend) keys as hot keys, or use the Sword and Shield icons at the bottom of the screen to issue the same commands.



CROSSROADS As in HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC, overland movement is handled via point-and-click. X marks the spot to which the party will travel in one turn.



KNIGHTMARE These Dark Horsemen have just slaughtered a party of Lizardmen in tactical combat in the forest.



PIGEON-COLD A small party tries to fight its way through one of the fortresses belonging to Air Worshippers.

Combat is made more interesting by the fact that, just as your character had to declare an allegiance to Earth, Air, Water, Fire, Chaos, Order, Life, or Death at the beginning of the game, all of the monsters, heroes, and the other five opponents (AI or human) that you encounter in the world will have allegiances, as well. In addition to the allegiances, of course, they will also draw from the magic associated with their allegiance, and the artifacts to be bartered or won from them will also draw from the power of that allegiance. Of course, allegiances also have impact on how tough your opponents may drive a trade and how likely they are to create a diplomatic alignment with you. This adds additional levels of variety and challenge to a game that already has a lot.

Diplomacy is even more important in this game than it was in MOM, CIVILIZATION, and LOR, the classic multiplayer games that required alliances. LOM is, however, one of the few games that not only allows you to win by stabbing your opponent in the back at the right time (the traditional Machiavellian way to win at DIPLOMACY and other multiplayer games), but also lets you stake out a cooperative win with either other human players or artificial opponents.

THAT OLD HACK MAGIC

In short, you won't need to thaw out newt's eyes or bat wings in order to conjure up a magical multiplayer game this Fall. LORDS OF MAGIC seems to be just the right kind of hybrid game, mixing the right elements from the best games before it, to almost supernaturally possess our discretionary time through Winter Solstice and beyond.

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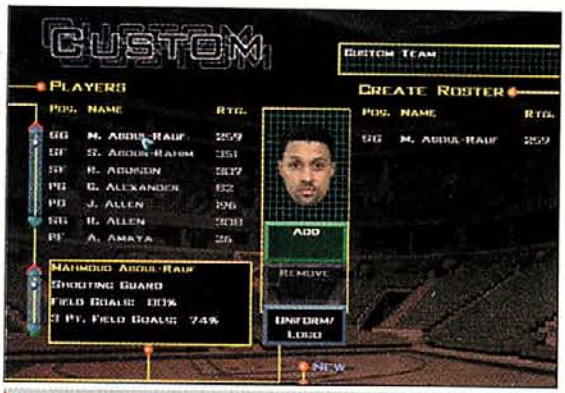
CIRCLE READER SERVICE #**195**

Target Release Date: Late 1997
Developer: EA Sports
Publisher: EA Sports

Net Gains

NBA Live 98 Should Add a Little More Basketball to This Sports Arcade Classic

by Jeff Green



DREAM TEAM You'll now be able to completely customize teams and leagues in NBA Live to organize your own fantasy play.

PC basketball is run, owned, and almost solely occupied by EA Sports' NBA Live franchise. For the most part, that hasn't been such a bad thing—the game has, in fact, won *CGW*'s Sports Game of the Year award for the past two seasons. And after playing an early alpha of the upcoming NBA Live 98, it looks as though EA is returning with another strong, dominant game.

BETTER CONTROL

NBA Live 98's design team has focused a lot of its energy this year on enhancing player control—a big weakness in prior editions of the game. On offense, there are now keys mapped for pivoting, crossover dribbles, backing in, and for passing the ball to a specific player. When shooting, you can now control the kind of dunk you attempt; plus, you can modify your jump shots by fading away or leaning in. In the alpha I played, the fadeaway jumper worked beautifully, offering the kind of strategic control I used to always wish I had in the previous version. Defense is also being pumped up a little, including, thankfully, the addition of a steal key—the single biggest omission in the '97 version.

Other than control issues, EA has enhanced gameplay in a few other ways. There is now a fourth level of difficulty (Superstar, in addition to Rookie, Starter, and All-Star), which should help smooth out and balance the differences in gameplay (in general, Rookie was way too easy and All-Star far too difficult). Team customization has been opened up in a big way, as you can now create teams—and leagues—from scratch, allowing you to indulge in pure fantasy play. Finally, EA is adding a 3-Point Shootout contest, with the exact same rules as in the real-life NBA All-Star game, which is not only a lot of fun, but is a perfect, short time-waster if you don't have the time for a real game before the boss gets out of his meeting.

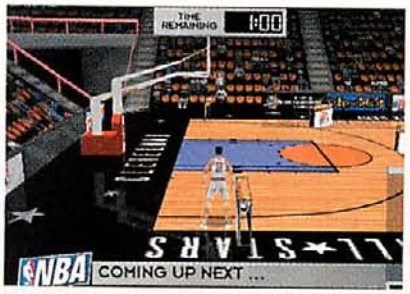


FACE JOB NBA Live 98 will sport 3Dfx-enhanced graphics and texture-mapped faces of a few hundred actual NBA players.

IN YOUR POLYGONAL FACE

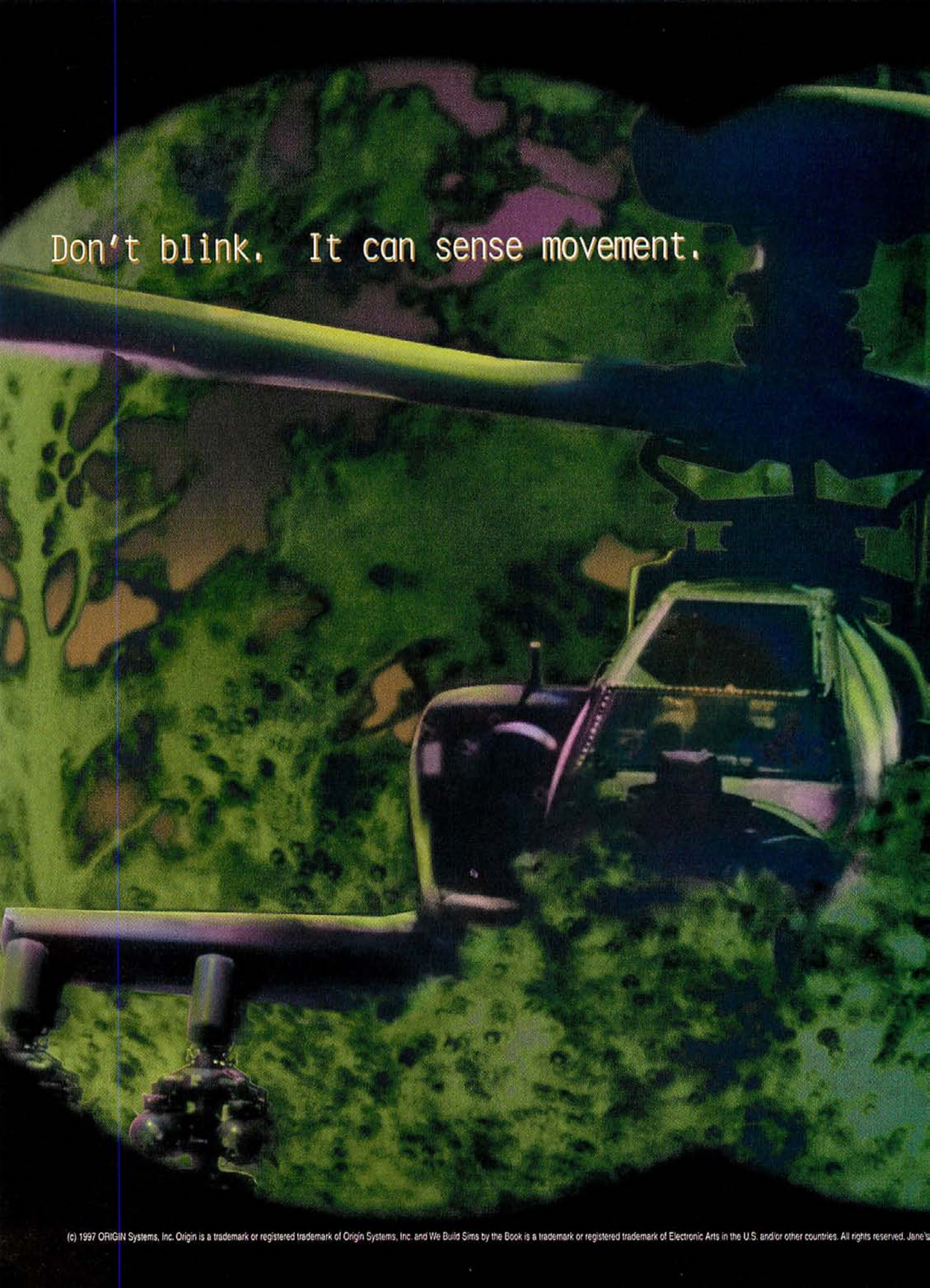
NBA Live 97 made an astounding leap by converting from 2D to 3D graphics, and while the graphics in Live 98 won't be as revolutionary, they are already, at this early stage, looking a lot better—if you have a 3Dfx board. The accelerated version that I played was stunning, and though EA is going to make having a 3D board optional, once you see it with the 3D board, you won't want to play without it.

EA Sports is also enhancing the player graphics by texture-mapping the actual faces of hundreds of real players onto the polygonal bodies, which is either going to be really cool or really disturbing—I can't decide which yet. While it's cool, in theory, to see a 3D player with the face of Karl Malone going to the hoop, when you actually see his frozen, expressionless mug plastered distortionally over an angular polygonal head, it looks less like "realism" and more like an outtake from a bad sci-fi movie. We'll see.



MONEY BALL NBA Live 98 will feature a 3-point shootout modeled after the fan favorite at the NBA All-Star game.

In any event, EA's list of enhancements to NBA Live 98 is heartening, and from what we've seen so far, it looks like it'll be better than last year's version. Like the Chicago Bulls themselves, this is a powerhouse franchise with no signs of slowing down. And only a fool would bet against them.



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Target Release Date: January 1998
Developer: Innerloop
Publisher: Eidos

Smooth Flying

This Action Sim Promises Performance Without a 3D Card

by Denny Atkin

By the early 21st century, the F-15, F-16, and F/A-18 aircraft, which are so popular now with simulation designers, will be considered third-world fighters. The F-22 Raptor will assume the pure fighter role currently served by the F-15, but the F-16 and F/A-18, which are used for both air combat and ground attack, will also need to be superseded by a more advanced aircraft. That plane will be the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF).

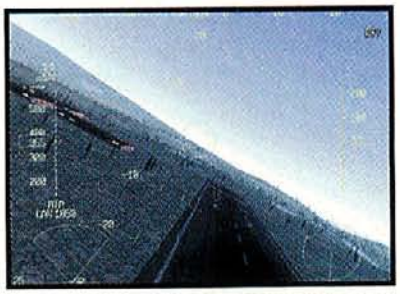
Both Boeing and Lockheed-Martin are competing for the lucrative JSF contract. The USAF, U.S. Navy, U.S. Marines, and the U.K. Royal Navy are all slated to buy variations on the plane. Only one of the prototypes will be chosen to serve the needs of all the services—and neither has flown yet. JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER, from Eidos, will let you climb into the cockpits of both contestants even before the real planes take flight.

V/STOL AND SUNROOF OPTIONAL

Because neither JSF prototype has entered testing, developer Innerloop has had to rely on unclassified estimates from the manufacturers as to how the planes will perform. The Boeing X-32 is the faster and stealthier of the pair, while the Lockheed-Martin X-35 can carry more weapons and is more agile.

How realistic the flight models are is anyone's guess at this point, since the real planes are still being built. From a general realism standpoint, the flight modeling is fairly convincing, even in the program's beta stage, with energy burning off in turns, pilots losing control in stalls, and speed affecting agility.

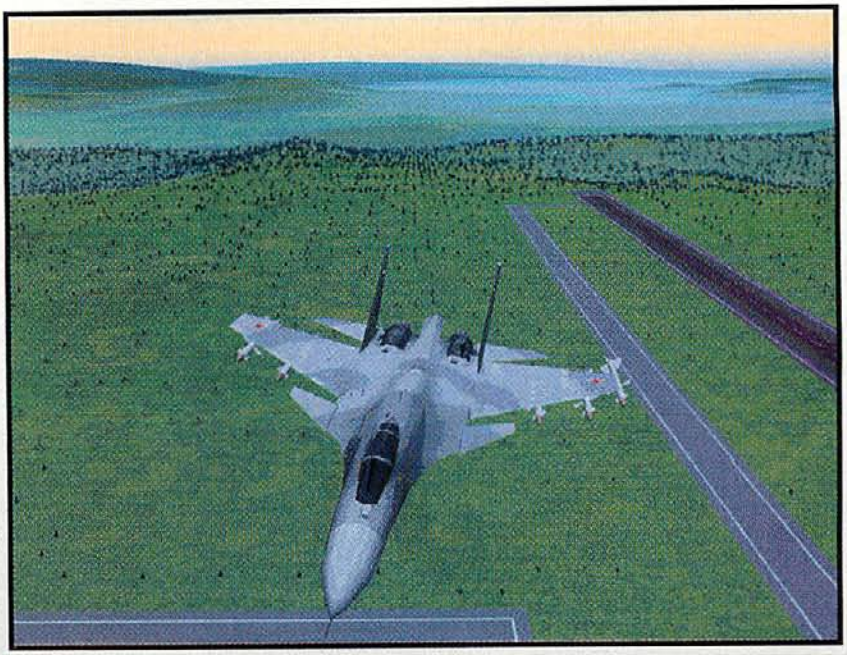
Inside the cockpit you'll find six multi-function displays, very similar to those found in EF2000 (even down to the lo-res look), but with many of the functions you find on the instruments in F-22 sims. In following the popular trend, the sim lets you adjust the MFD functions by clicking the onscreen buttons surrounding them.



BUZZ CUT When you buzz the airfield you notice trees and hazing in the distance; the sim maintains a smooth frame-rate on a P166.



SITUATIONAL AWARENESS Six MFDs give you status updates; they're readable in virtual cockpit mode at resolutions of 640x480 or better.



TERRAIN RIDE An Su-35 skirts a darkened Allied airbase on a stormy day; the terrain in JSF features real-time shading.

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RAND-MCNAPALM You can choose targets and waypoints yourself during JSF campaigns, or the mission generator can suggest targets and routes for you.

The viewing system is nicely done, with a scrollable virtual cockpit, snap views to the sides and rear, and an EF2000-style smooth-panning padlock for tracking air and ground targets. A wide variety of external views are featured as well.

CAMPAIGN PROMISES

JSF will offer four campaigns, in addition to quick-action and deathmatch-style multiplayer combat. Set in Colombia, Afghanistan, Korea, and the Kola Peninsula, the campaigns aren't dynamically generated—the starting conditions are always the same. Once the action starts, however, the campaigns become dynamic in nature, with troop and aircraft movement dependent on the success of your squadron's strikes.

You can plan missions from scratch, first choosing a target and then setting waypoints to (and from) it, or you can let the computer generate missions for you. The mission editor was fairly basic in the build I examined—you could not set precise altitudes for waypoints, you could only specify whether they were high or low. This is designed for the pilot who enjoys the in-the-air action more than the on-the-ground planning.

You can include X-32, X-35, F-16, and F-22 aircraft in your four-plane strike packages. You choose your own armament, from Sidewinder and Amraam missiles to JDAM and JSOW advanced air-to-ground weapons; on the other aircraft you can only specify whether to maximize stealth or useful load.

In combat, you'll have fairly comprehensive wingman-communication abilities, as well as the ability to request downlink info from AWACS radar aircraft.

LOW AND FAST

By far the most impressive aspect of JSF is the sim's graphics environment. The environment is rendered in 16-bit color with highly detailed objects, terrain that extends to the horizon and that doesn't "pop up" as you approach it, and even individual trees, which become visible when you fly at low levels. Yet, even with this level of detail, Innerloop has somehow managed to coax top-notch performance out of the sim without requiring a 3D card. On a P166 I was able to get a smooth frame rate (20+ fps) in 640x480 mode; on a P90 I had to drop down to 400x300 to keep things perfectly smooth, but the sim still looked very good. Gamers who aren't absolutely fanatical about smooth frame rates may even find 800x600 mode enjoyable on P166MMX and faster machines.

The sim supports any graphics mode your video card can handle—I was able to run in 1600x1200 mode, albeit at less than 1fps. Still, it's nice to know you'll be able to dig this out in three years and run in that resolution on your SuperPentiumProRoyale II. The final product may also support 3Dfx Voodoo 3D cards, although this will primarily benefit gamers with P133 or slower machines.

Although the game is still a work-in-progress, it's already more stable and more entertaining than some other recent sim efforts currently sitting on store shelves. It appears that Innerloop has created an accessible, fast-action simulation with none of the oversimplifications that made F-22 Lightning II and Silent Thunder disappointments for more experienced sim pilots.



Face Off

The real JSF will be available in three versions: a conventional model for the USAF, a carrier-capable version for the Navy, and a V/STOL (Vertical/Short Take-Off and Landing) model for the Marines and Royal Navy. Joint Strike Fighter, however, models only the USAF version.

The JSF has many characteristics in common with the F-22 Raptor. It's stealthy and has a weapons bay for internal weapons carriage to minimize radar signatures. Using an in-flight data link with AWACS planes, the JSF can enter enemy territory with its radar off, all the while maintaining awareness of enemy aircraft around it. All of this is modeled nicely in JSF. Although you can create missions using both JSF prototypes in the simulation, only one of the two will actually be chosen for production in the real world.





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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #375

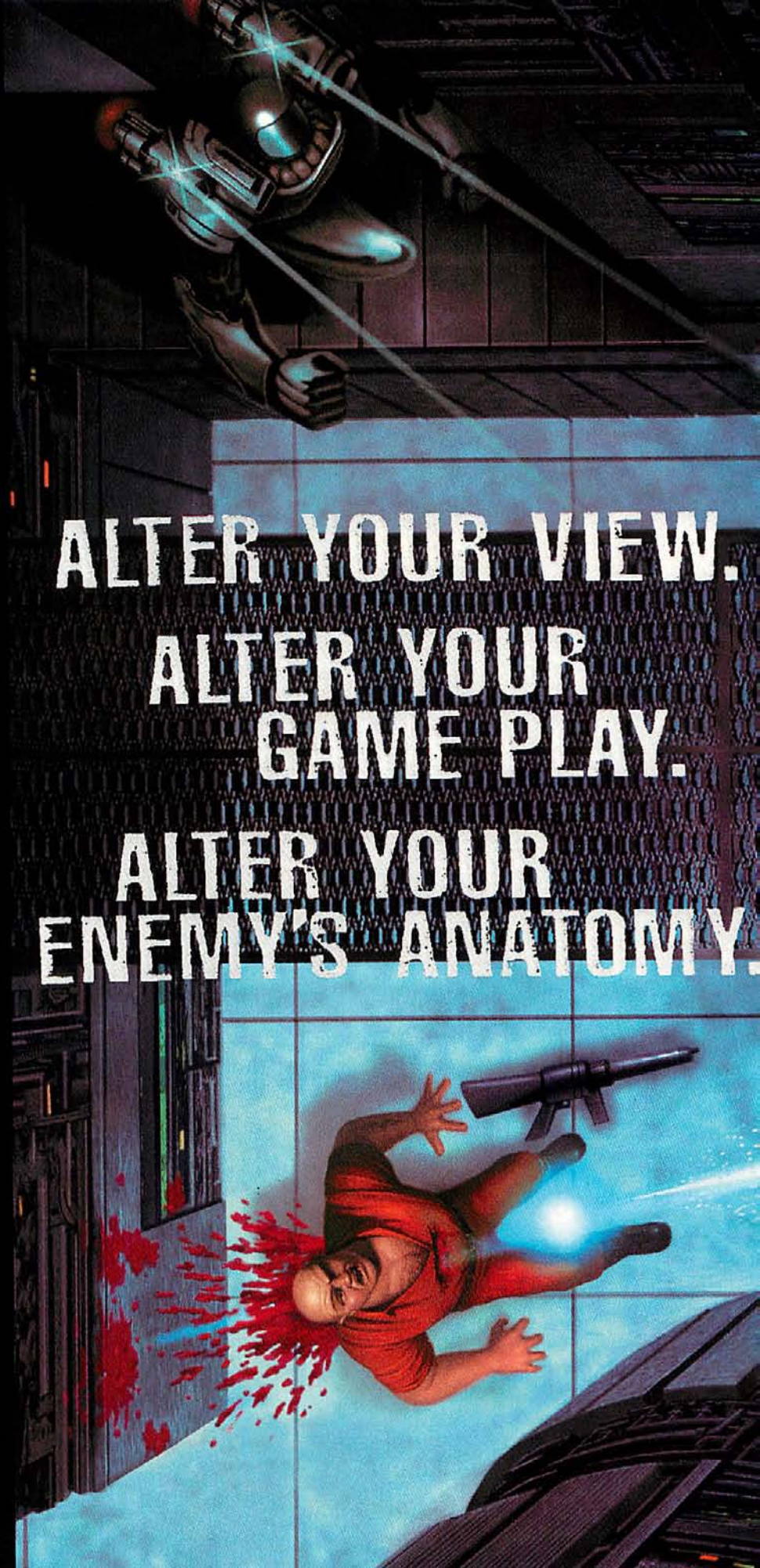
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PC Games

"A deeper world than the typical first-person shooter."
Next Generation

"One manic gaming experience."
CNET Gamecenter

"You are starting a whole new style of 3D shooters."
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"This game has to be the best that I've seen in years!"
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Mutants, Psychos, Cultists and Punks are converging on you from everywhere; above, below, behind, in front. You definitely haven't been here before. Top-down views don't just change the way the game looks, they change the way 3D action games play. You'll no longer be blindly running into doom, but mercilessly causing it from every conceivable angle.

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6 unique multiplayer games for up to 8 players, including Assassin, Arsenal and Stockpile.



22 twisted enemies, each with unique combat behavior, plus 21 bone-shredding weapons.



20 non-linear territories: no set path; explore ahead before completing previous levels.



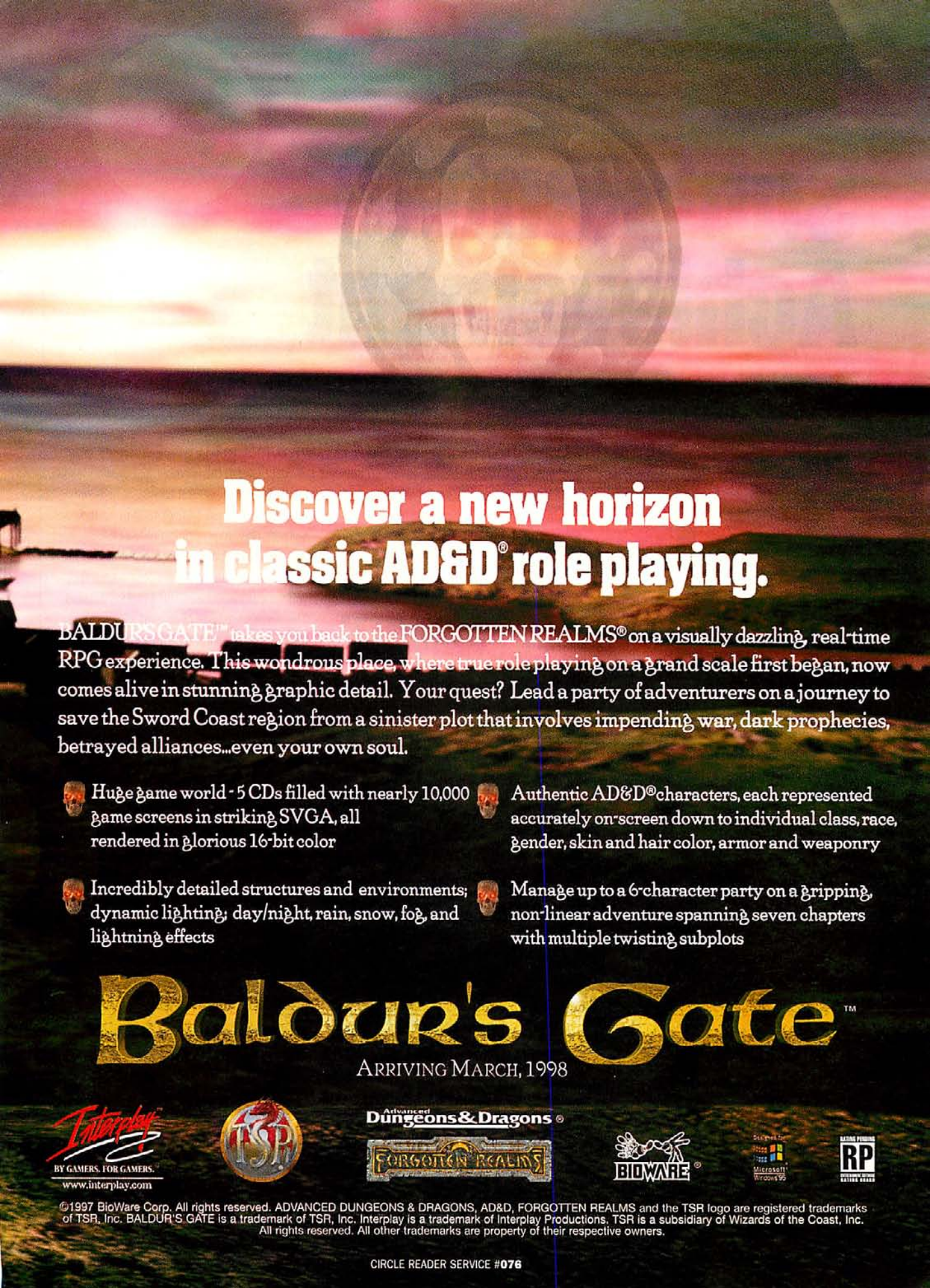
RAVEN SOFTWARE™

REDORB ENTERTAINMENT™

MATURE M AGES 17+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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in classic AD&D® role playing.
BALDUR'S GATE™ takes you back to the FORGOTTEN REALMS® on a visually dazzling, real-time RPG experience. This wondrous place, where true role playing on a grand scale first began, now comes alive in stunning graphic detail. Your quest? Lead a party of adventurers on a journey to save the Sword Coast region from a sinister plot that involves impending war, dark prophecies, betrayed alliances...even your own soul.
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Manage up to a 6-character party on a gripping, non-linear adventure spanning seven chapters with multiple twisting subplots
Baldur's Gate™
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Interplay
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Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®
FORGOTTEN REALMS
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Designed for Microsoft Windows 95
RP
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #076

Target Release Date: October 1997
Developer: Criterion
Publisher: Ubi Soft

Sub(stantial) Achievement

Take a Trip Down Under in Ubi Soft's New Aquatic Adventure

by Greg Fortune

There have been several times in my life when I felt about an inch tall. This is the first time I've ever enjoyed the experience. In fact, SUB CULTURE (the unique game in which my Lilliputian adventurer piloted a minisubmarine) is so innovative and entertaining, it has landed squarely on my "can't wait for it to be released" list.

TO BOLDLY GO...

Being a tiny, air-breathing humanoid can have its challenges, especially when your environment is entirely underwater. Luckily for you, your race has developed advanced submarine technology. What your ancestors did before this technology was developed is beyond me, but this is the state of affairs you begin with. Those darned humans are polluting your ocean habitat, and all of the toxins are mutating the fish and ruining your submarine. Your first major problem is that three of the four factions who share your environment are openly hostile toward each other, and the fourth is neutral. How can you save your race from environmental extinction all by yourself? One clue—you can't.

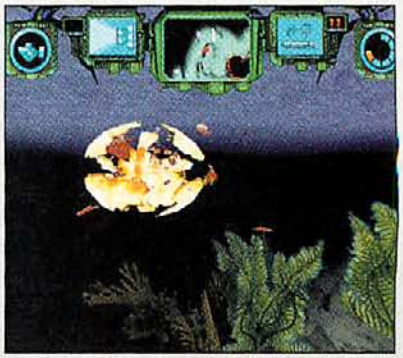


THIS BUD'S FOR ME You can buy a lot of beer with the cash this will bring in.

VIEW TO A THRILL

Just being in this environment is fun. I spent the first few minutes just playing around with the internal and external views of my sub. The software-only engine looks pretty clean, but if you have a 3D graphics accelerator, watch out! It'll take a crowbar and three Teamsters to pry you away from your system. It looks that good. The oceans are wide open, and you are free to roam at will, exploring the area. The physics seem to be well modeled also. The way your sub speeds up, the lag you experience when your propeller first bites into the water from a dead stop, the way your sub gets pushed off course by the currents—all are very well done. I especially enjoyed the periods when it grew dark and I got to creep along the ocean floor with my floodlight illuminating the sea floor. You've got to see it to believe it.

▸▸▸*Continued on pg 145*



JESTER'S DEAD This pirate is a little worse for the wear after being introduced to one of my trusty homing missiles.



Get an Avalanche of Excitement and a chance to win a 1998 Jeep® Wrangler SE when you buy Interplay games. Plus, get up to $100 cash back on your purchase of Interplay games, a Diamond Multimedia Monster 3D Accelerator Card and/or an ACT LABS EagleMAX joystick!

To win the rockin' 1998 Jeep® Wrangler SE, read about each exciting Interplay title and plow through the puzzles on the following pages. When you reach the Puzzle Summit on the final page, take the circled letters from each individual puzzle and decode the message on the Sweepstakes/rebate Entry Form. Follow the instructions, and mail in for your rebate and a chance to win the 1998 Jeep® Wrangler SE or a library of the 12 exciting Interplay titles featured on the following pages.

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STAR TREK™

STARFLEET ACADEMY™

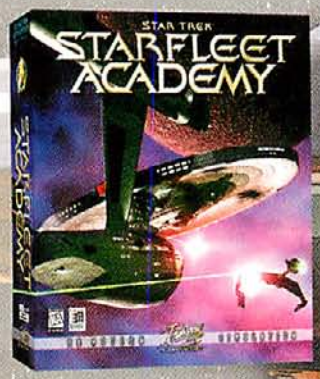
THE FIRST EVER STAR TREK SPACE BATTLE SIMULATOR.

"The most anticipated space sim of the year"
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A variety of missions will test your ingenuity, leadership and courage – and determine if you've got what it takes to graduate first in your class. Going where no simulator has gone before, you'll take on 30 of the universe's finest starships, from a cloaking Klingon Bird of Prey to the Romulan heavy cruiser. All the while, Captain Kirk (William Shatner), Commander Chekov (Walter Koenig) and George Takei in a special appearance as Captain Sulu, are there to provide instruction as well as inspiration.

WINDOWS®95 PC CD-ROM





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Designed for Microsoft® Windows 95

Mac OS

PlayStation
Coming Soon



VOKECH _ _ _ _ _ _ _
6 10

1. Unscramble the names of the 3 legendary Star Trek instructors featured in Starfleet Academy.

RIKK _ _ _ _ LUUS _ _ _ _ _
17

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The ultimate pool simulation just got better. *Guaranteed.*





Over 2 million pool players have taken a break with Virtual Pool the #1 pool game in the world. Now, after 8,000 man hours of enhancements, new 3D look and 50 new game features like called shots and the ability to jump balls, the ultimate pool simulation is better than ever. And it's still the only pool game guaranteed to improve your real pool playing. **Virtual Pool 2** includes 5 new games, 3 modes of play (Amateur, Pro and Championship), all new 3D-rendered graphics and 3 texture-mapped pool halls. Plus, unlimited camera angles, adjustable table characteristics, an all new physics model and a multi-player tournament mode with up to 64 computer opponents. There is even a new pool tutorial with lessons on specialty shots and pool strategy.

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WINDOWS®95 PC CD-ROM

Celeris

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Designed for Microsoft Windows 95

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WINDOWS®95 PC CD-ROM



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Designed for Microsoft Windows 95

READ ADVISORY ALL SUITABLE FOR ALL AUDIENCES



2. What sequel to the best-selling virtual game is so real it will improve your actual play?

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #258

REDNECK RAMPAGE™



"The Trailer Park Won't Be The Same"

- Computer Gaming World

Redneck Rampage is a ruckus-raisin' riot of a first-person 3D shooter set in the fictional town of Hickston, Arkansas. Armed with up to ten impractical weapons, players blast their way through country bars, trailer parks, and chicken processing plants in search of their missing pig who's been abducted by evil aliens. But they ain't gonna make it without enough fuel (pork rinds and whiskey) to fend off good ol' boys with sawed-off shotguns who aim to blow away their bony behinds.

PC CD-ROM

"It's A Heck Of A Hayride"
- Gamespot

"The Funniest Game We've Played this Year Y'all"
- Happy Puppy

"One Of The Most Hysterical Games In Years"
- Online Games Review

"The Bestest Thing To Hit The South"
- Strategy Plus

All The KILLIN', Twice The HUMOR... Half The INTELLIGENCE.





XATRIX entertainment

Keep Yer Eyes Open For Official Redneck Rampage Levels

Interplay™
By Rednecks, For Rednecks.



3. Complete the Redneck Rampage Word Search.

G	B	G	I	P	V	D	I	C	C			
T	U	R	D	M	I	N	I	O	N			
K	B	N	I	!	X	I	W	O	E			
R	B	O	N	Y	E	R	S	T	I			
O	A	D	R	A	N	O	E	L	L			
P	I	N	E	K	C	I	H	C	A			

Gun
Pig
Vixen
Coot
Cow

Turdminion
Bony
Yer
Leonard
Pork

Chicken
Alien
Bubba
Rind

5 letters are unused. 4 are the letter I. What's the 5th?

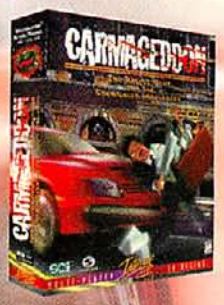
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THE RACING GAME FOR THE CHEMICALLY IMBALANCED.

THE CARMAGEDDON XV5. 520 HORSES UNDER THE HOOD. EVEN MORE PEDESTRIANS ON TOP.

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Some race for glory. Some for money. Then there are those who drive for the sheer ecstasy of crunching bones against their bumper. Introducing **Carmageddon**, the racing game that separates the men from the grease spots on the road. Pit your wits and wheels against 25 maniac drivers over 36 formidable race circuits to become The King of Carnage and The Prince of Pile-up. **PC CD-ROM**



STAINLESS SCi MATURE M AGES 17+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB



DESCENT™ II

THE INFINITE ABYSS

This Time, You're Going All The Way Down

Descent II: The Infinite Abyss, includes the award-winning Descent II with an optional 3D accelerated version and the all new Vertigo Series. With 50 levels, 40 enemy robots, easy to use utilities like the Mission Builder, Level Converter and the Robot Texture Editor your Descent experience is infinite. **PC CD-ROM**

Interplay BY GAMERS. FOR GAMERS.™



Designed for Microsoft Windows 95

TEEN T AGES 13+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Descent II Developed by Parallax Software

designed by Brainwave



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Since 1989 **Bomberman** has been defined by gamers as the ultimate multi-player game. Now "the man" is available in an enhanced multi-player package complete with 3D rendered graphics, new character animations, and a vast repertoire of spiteful canned and custom taunts. Keeping true to the original addictive gameplay, you better think fast as you vie for deadly power-ups, race against the clock and blow your opponents to smithereens.

WINDOWS®95 CD-ROM

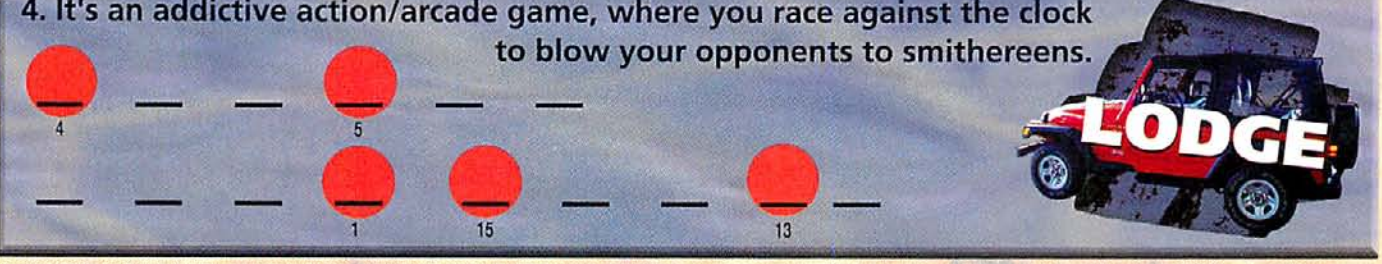


HUDSON®

Compatible Windows 95 Compatible

KIDS TO ADULTS AGES 6+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

4. It's an addictive action/arcade game, where you race against the clock to blow your opponents to smithereens.



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THE BATTLEGROUND BETWEEN ULTIMATE GOOD AND EVIL



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One by one, the Seals of protection have been broken. Step by step, Darkness prepares for its final assault. And as the apocalypse draws near, only one force can stop the shadow of evil from eternal reign...you.



★★★★★ ***Computer Life***

...offers one of the most fluid, absorbing fantasy-horror game experiences available."

★★★★½ ***CGW***

"ROTH covers all the bases."



AVAILABLE NOW ON PC CD-ROM

Interplay™ BY GAMERS. FOR GAMERS.™

Gremlin

TEEN T AGES 13+

Compatible Windows 95

5. In Realms of the Haunting, it's the Battleground Between

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _ and _ _ _ _ _.



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FORGOTTEN REALMS

Dungeons & Dragons

DESCENT TO UNDERMOUNTAIN™ ADVENTURE

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The AD&D® game's most famous world, the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, is now powered by the award-winning Descent™ engine.



DESCENT TO UNDERMOUNTAIN™ is the most revolutionary new AD&D® FORGOTTEN REALMS® computer game ever. Based on an enhanced, SVGA version of the award-winning Descent™ engine, you are challenged to build an authentic AD&D® character and plunge deep into Undermountain — a twisting, monster-filled dungeon labyrinth located beneath the city of Waterdeep.



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Survival comes down to two things: The role of strategy. And the roll of the die.



Introducing the new CD-ROM version of TSR's blockbuster dice strategy hit, DRAGON DICE. Players are challenged to build and command dice armies from an assortment of races and creatures that struggle for territorial dominance. Multi-player features, animated tutorial and special collectible Dragon Master die make DRAGON DICE a must buy for strategy enthusiasts.

DRAGON DICE™ GAME



FREE EXCLUSIVE DRAGONMASTER DIE INCLUDED

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- CURSE OF THE AZURE BONDS™
- SECRET OF THE SILVER BLADES™
- POOLS OF DARKNESS™
- HILLSFAR™
- EYE OF THE BEHOLDER™
- EYE OF THE BEHOLDER II™
- EYE OF THE BEHOLDER III™
- DUNGEON HACK™
- GATEWAY TO THE SAVAGE FRONTIER™
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FORGOTTEN REALMS

Dungeons & Dragons



6. It's 12 of the greatest role playing fantasy adventures ever, gathered in one boxed set.

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Fallout

A POST NUCLEAR ROLE PLAYING GAME

"Fallout has everything necessary to be the best roleplaying game of all time"

- Next Generation

A NEW BREED OF RPG



In the recent wave of fantasy RPG-lites, FALLOUT's post apocalyptic vision sets a new standard for today's role-players.

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With unusual characters, hidden surprises, unique locales, and multiple death sequences, FALLOUT packs a replay value few games can match.

- If you agitate someone with your comments, they'll look and act agitated and remember that encounter. Depending on the player's choice of conversation topics, characters will look happy, normal, and/or angry.
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- Improve your character's skills through play and receive perks tailored to your character's abilities.
- Available on WIN®95/DOS and Mac CD-ROM.





Interplay™ BY GAMERS, FOR GAMERS.™

MACPLAY CD-ROM Mac OS Designed for Microsoft Windows 95 MATURE M AGES 17+ ESRB



7. Fallout is a post-nuclear role playing game with over 50 mini-quests where you can target specific body parts to:

_ _ _ _ _ _ _, _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _,

or _ _ _ _ _ _, as _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _.

2 9

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To enter the sweepstakes only:

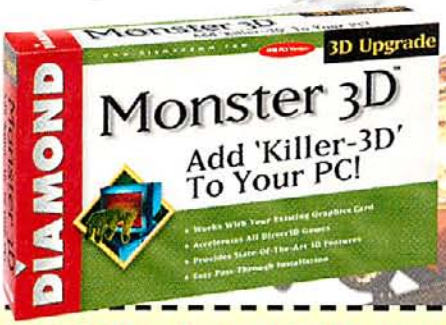
1. Complete the puzzle and mail this form to:

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ACT·LABS MAX THE EXPERIENCE



Entry Form

Take circled letters from puzzles on the previous pages & decode message:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

Eligible Interplay Titles:
(check all that you purchased, maximum of 4 games without additional accessory purchases, maximum 6 with accessory purchases)

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- ☐ Virtual Pool™ 2
- ☐ Fallout™
- ☐ Beat the House™ Win 95/Win
- ☐ Realms of the Haunting™
- ☐ DESCENT TO UNDERMOUNTAIN™
- ☐ DRAGON DICE™
- ☐ The FORGOTTEN REALMS® Archives
- ☐ Redneck Rampage™
- ☐ Atomic Bomberman™
- ☐ Descent II™: The Infinite Abyss
- ☐ Carmageddon™

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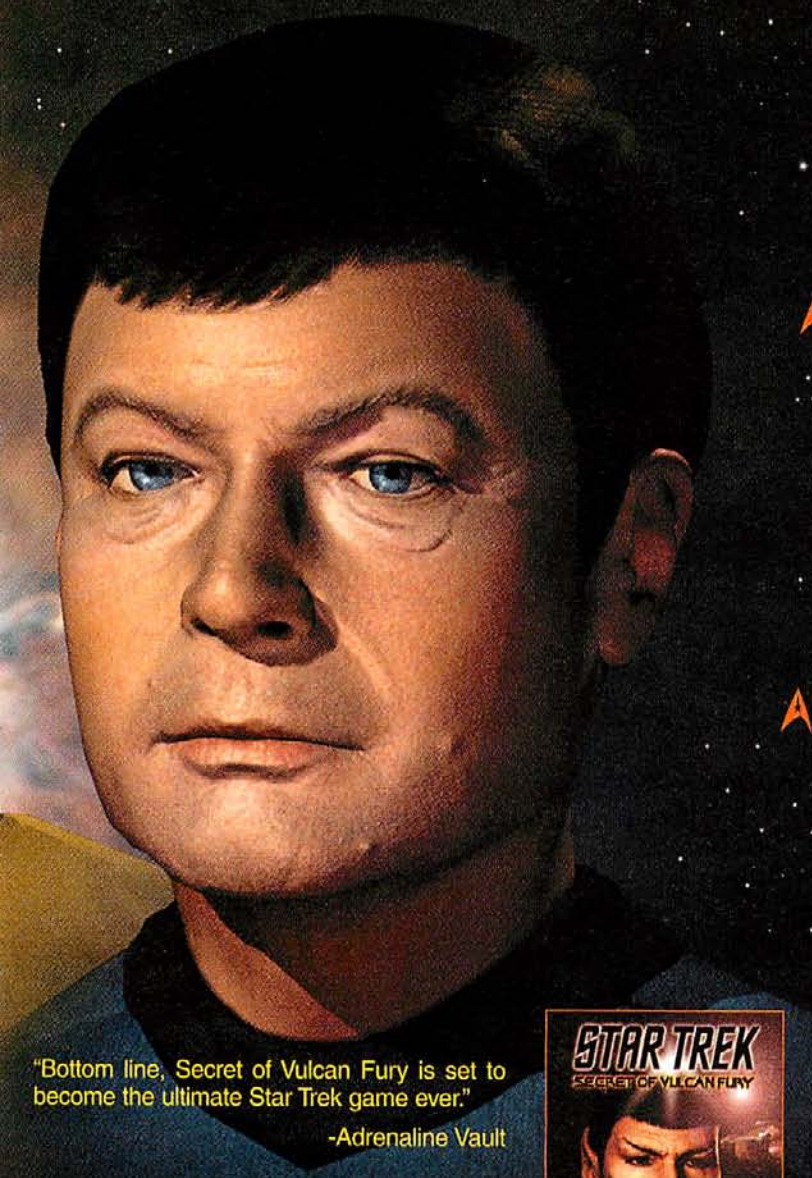
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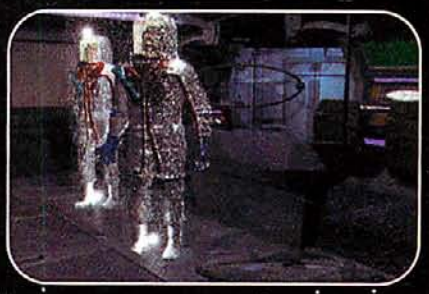
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RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Designed for Microsoft Windows 95

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EITHER WAY, YOU'RE GOING DOWN LIKE NEVER BEFORE.

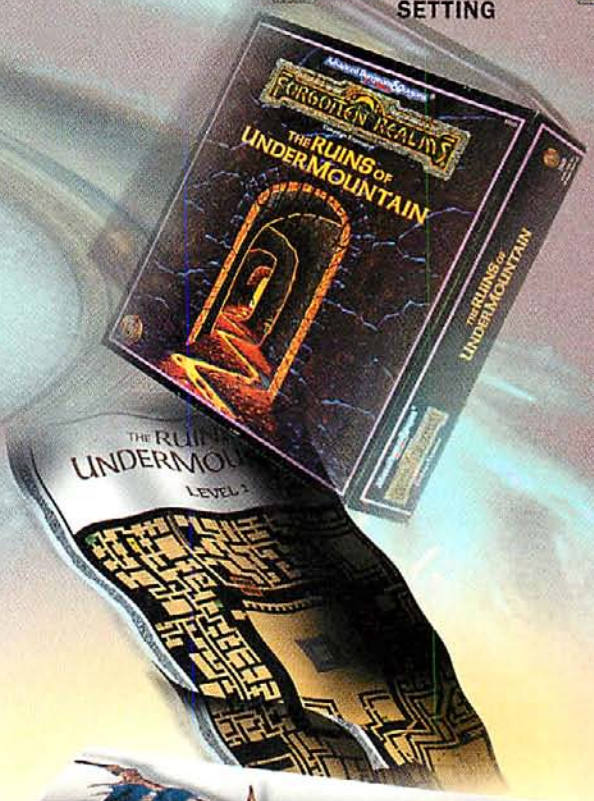
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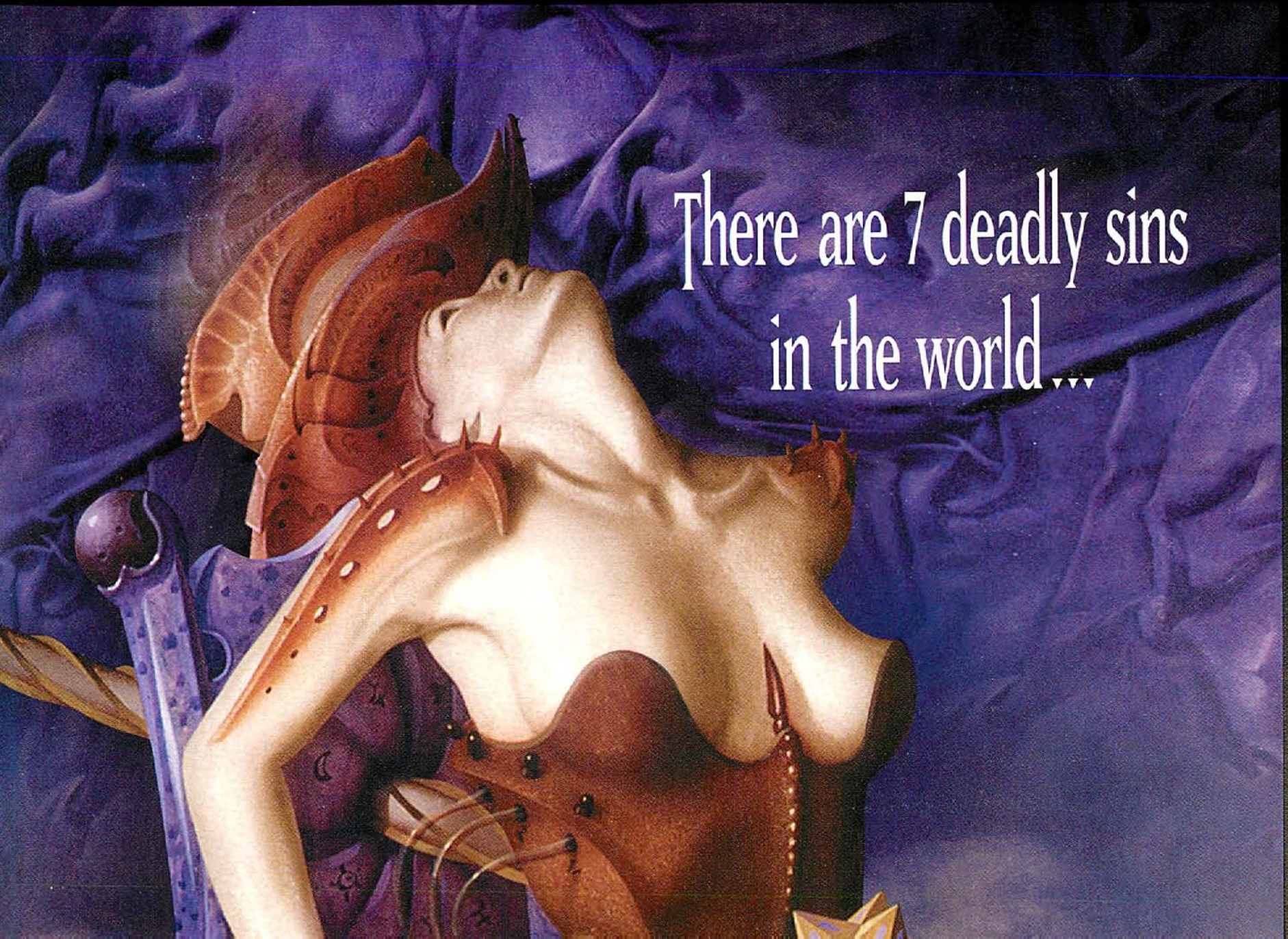


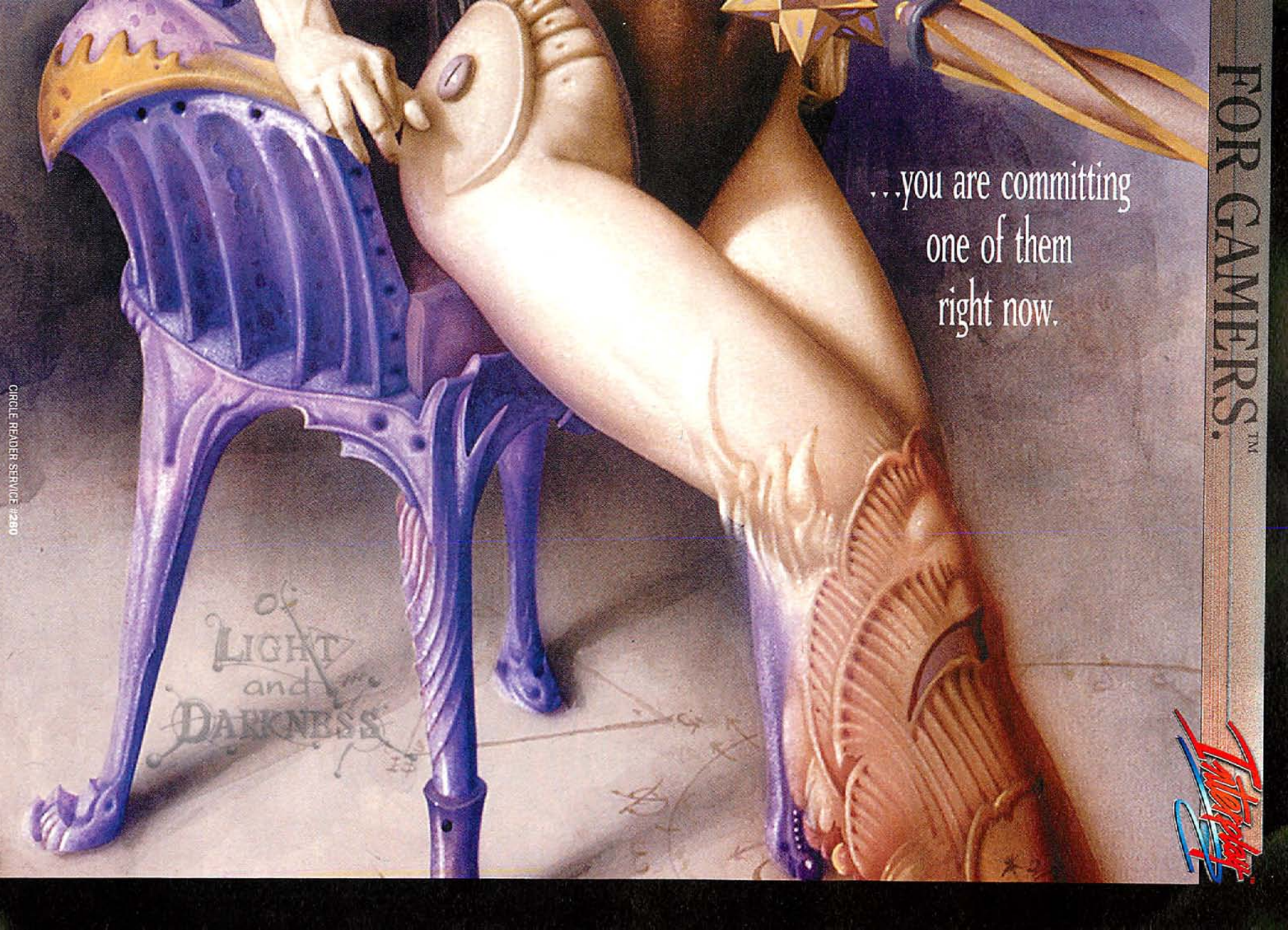


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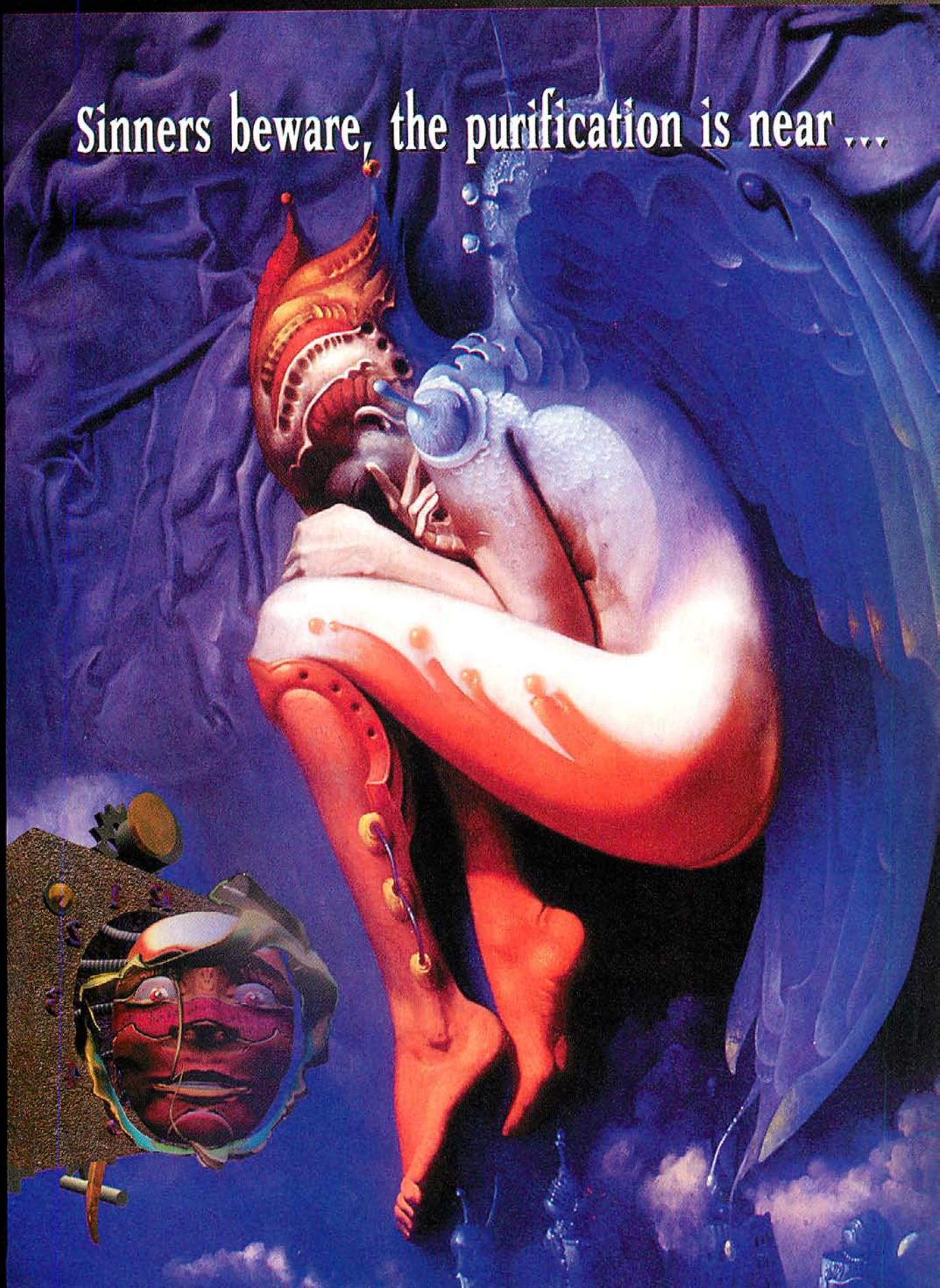
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There are 7 deadly sins
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #280


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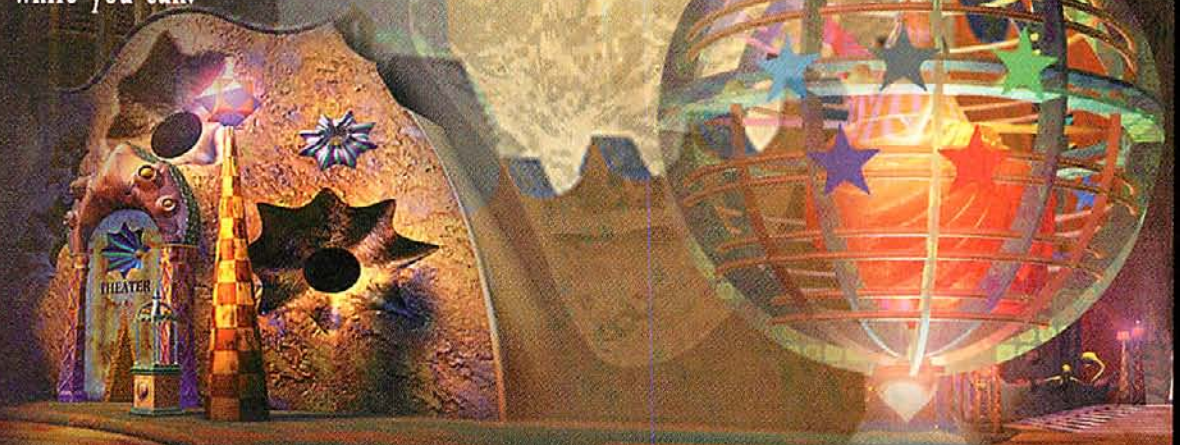
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Actual scenes from game

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tribal dreams

Designed for Microsoft Windows 95

RATING PENDING RP ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD

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Play, don't pay

on the house, on your PC

ALL NEW

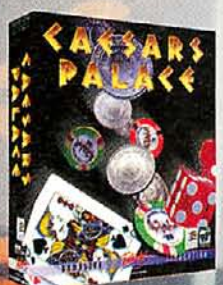
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Also available for the Sony PlayStation™ game console.

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- Gamespot

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"The Funniest Game We've Played This Year Y'all"
- Happy Puppy

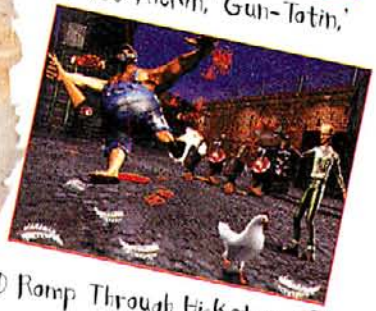
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No one this side of Kirk has flown anything this advanced.

Until now.

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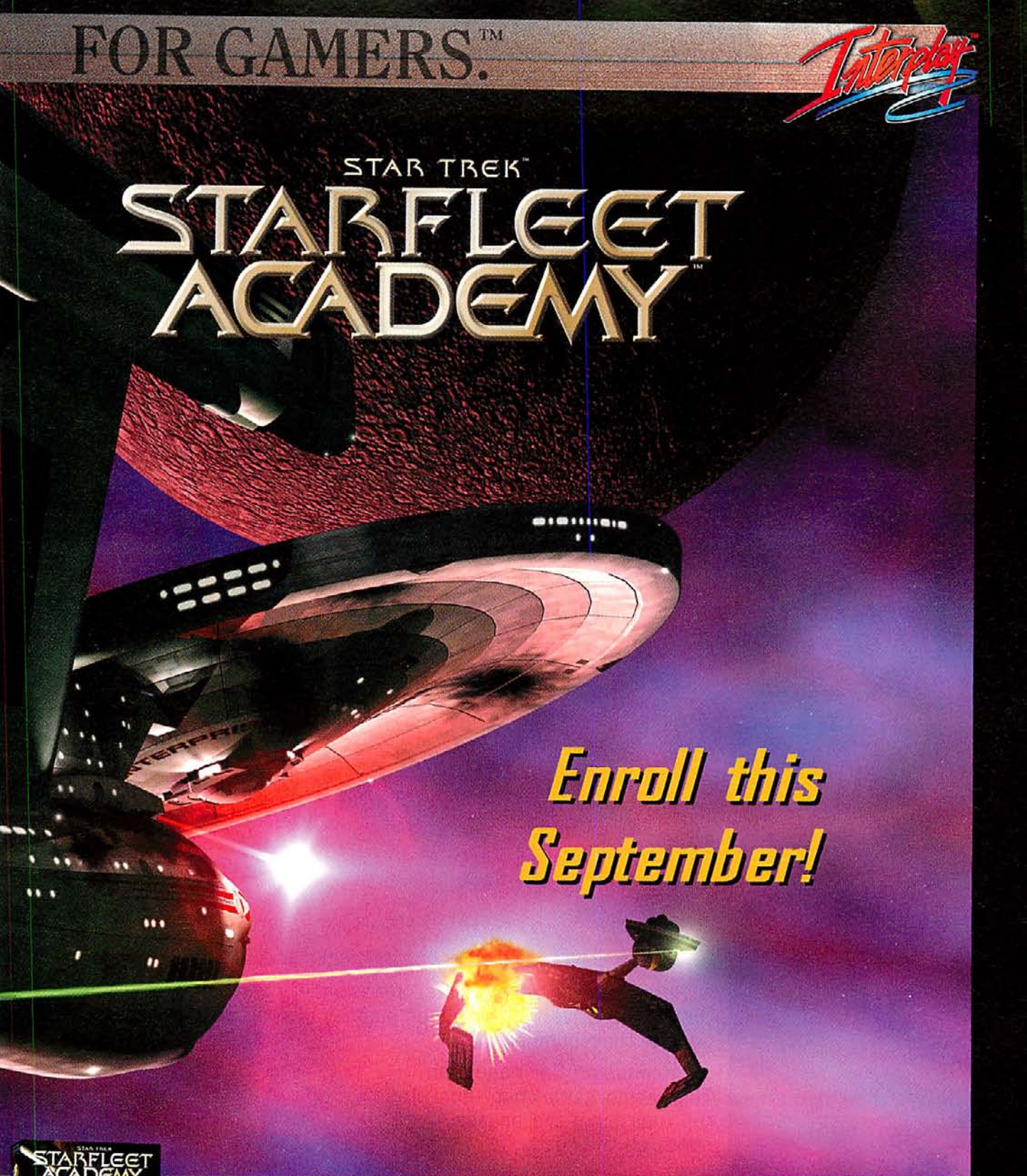
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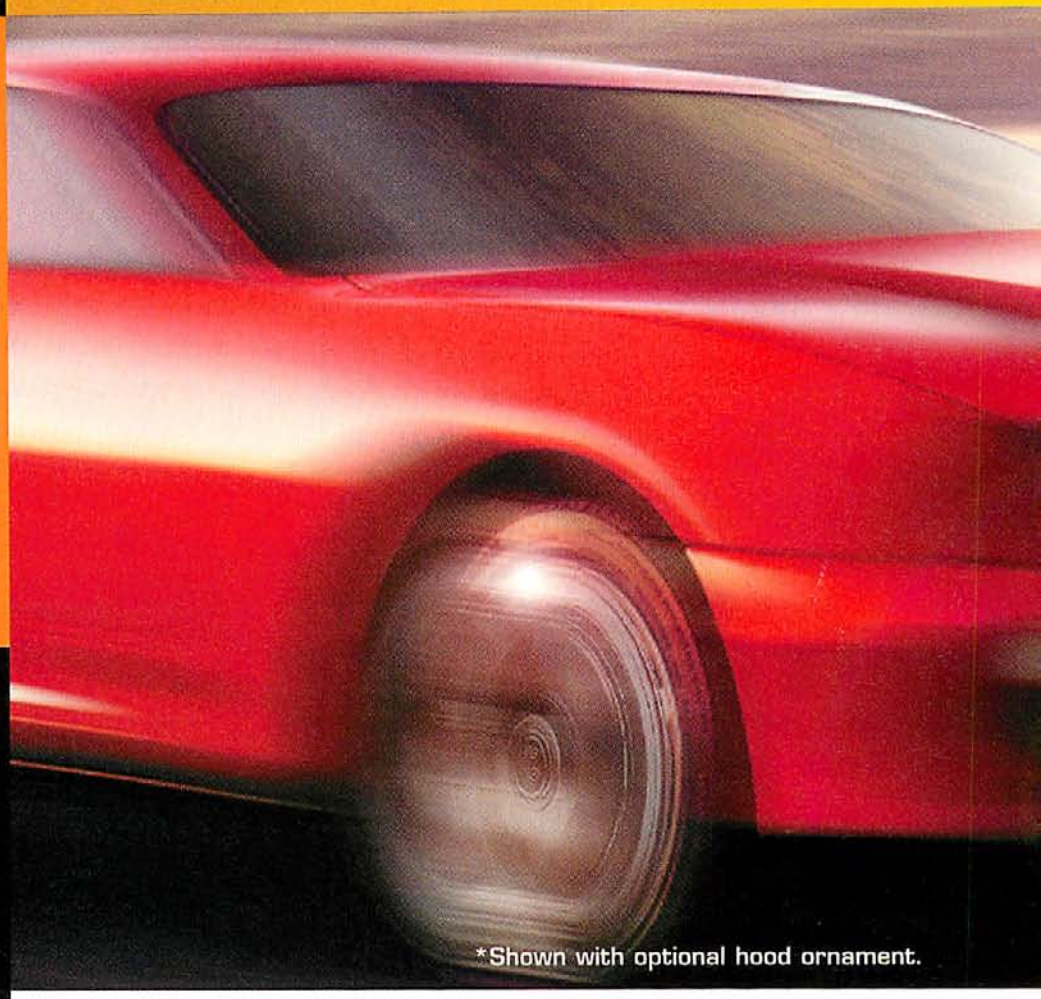
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- PEDESTRIANS=POINTS!

Some race for glory. Some for money. Then there are those who drive for the sheer ecstasy of crunching bones against their bumper.

Introducing Carmageddon. The racing game that separates the men from the grease spots on the road.

Drive whatever you want, wherever you want, over whoever you want. You make the rules.



Stomach-churning realism . . . crash, crumple, burn, skid, and jump in glorious 3D!

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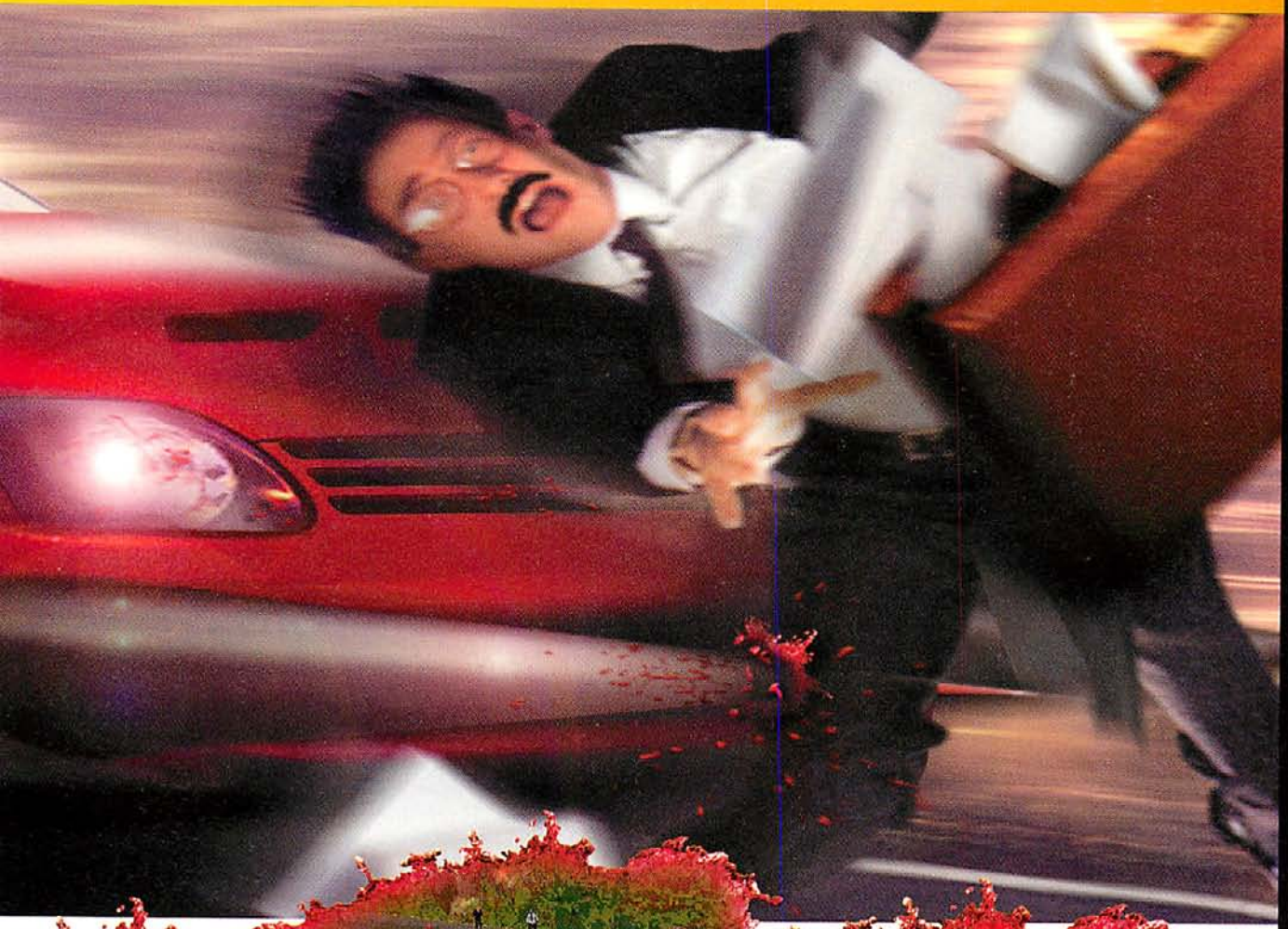
Available on PC CD-ROM

Test drive the demo at www.interplay.com

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520 HORSES UNDER THE HOOD.
EVEN MORE PEDESTRIANS ON TOP.





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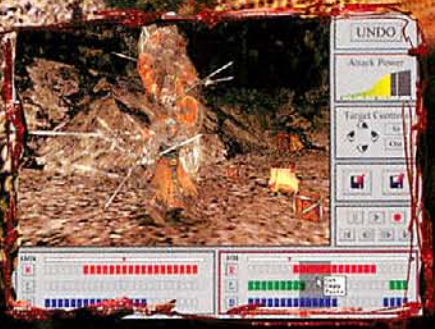
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Hack your way through a savage world or head straight for the arena.



For the 1st time battle up to 4 players via network or modem in arenas filled with traps.



Create, store and trade killer custom moves with the versatile move editor.

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Choosing your play is as simple as pressing a button.

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Fully Licensed.

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Plus Customize Players and Teams, General Manager Mode, and Adjustable Real-Time Camera Movement Before the Snap.

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PlayStation

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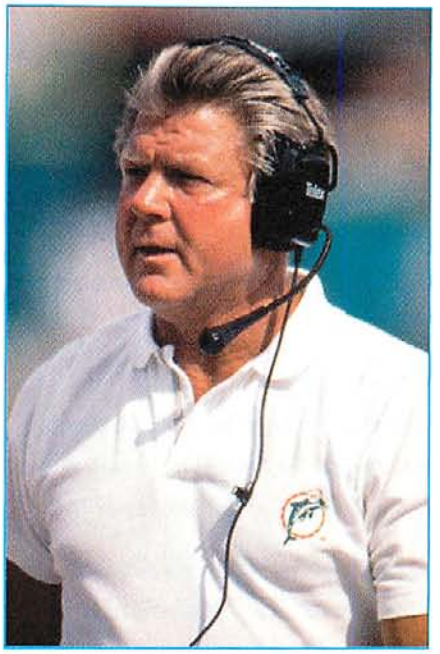
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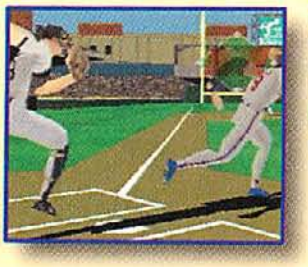
Start Taking Notes.
October 1997

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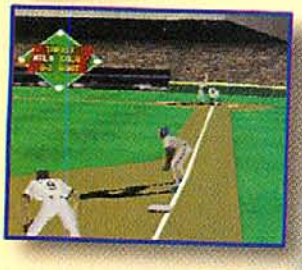
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The Difference Is Real.

VR SPORTS






"9 out of 10"

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"...VR Baseball '97 is the new king of baseball games."

— PS Extreme




"...a real contender for baseball game of the year — 92%."

— P.S.X.

"Beautifully textured polygonal players move with life-like grace."

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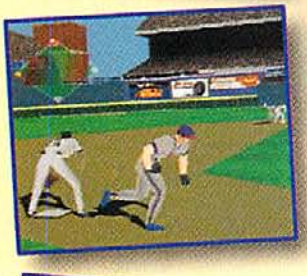
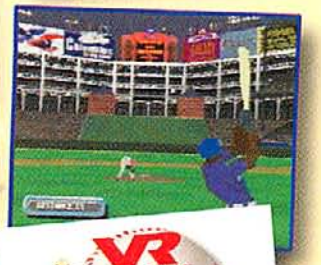



"VR Baseball will make you eat, sleep and live baseball."

— Game Informer

Try it!

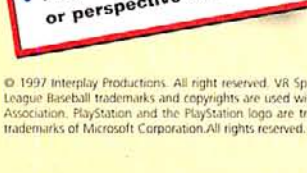
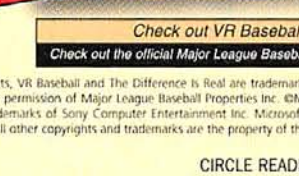
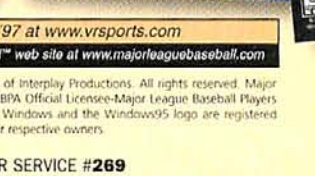
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PlayStation

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KIDS TO ADULTS K-A CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Tools of the Trade

There are more than 30 modifications available for your submarine. There are several types of weapons, prospecting tools, upgrades, and various items that will be needed for particular missions. These items can be stored in your ship's hold, but can be swapped only while you're docked. If you pick the wrong tool for the job, you'll have to return to port to make a change. There is no charge for changing the equipment on your sub, just for buying more. Here's a taste of some of the items available for purchase at your local underwater trading posts:



Shield Repair: For a nominal fee, your shields will be restored to full power. You can apply it only while docked at a city, so if you are getting pounded, make best speed toward the nearest friendly base. Don't leave home without it!



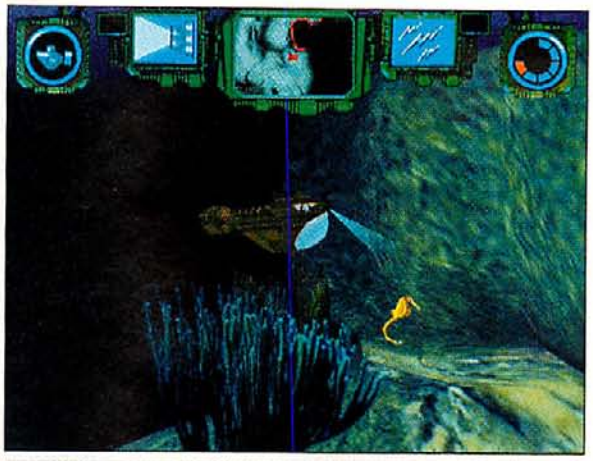
Homing Missiles: A major upgrade to the standard straight-line torpedo—these powerful beauties will home in on the nearest metal object. Be careful when friendly units are nearby, as these really are like wild dogs in a meat market.



Magnet: Used to harvest metal objects from the sea floor for processing by the Brotherhood. Also the only way to pull a sub in trouble off the sea floor and back to a friendly base.



Escape Pod: This will not help you if your sub is sinking, but it will help you rescue crews from crippled vessels. Also used to put a boarding party onto or release prisoners from a hostile ship.



SMELL THE FLOWERS The dynamic plant and animal life contribute a lot to the feel of the game. This is no barren sea.

»»Continued from pg 112

YESH, MASTER?

The openness of the game does not end with the environment. As a freelance sub pilot, you have the opportunity to visit the different cities in the area and accept missions from the different races. One of the factions is made up of fast, deadly pirates, so you have to watch your back when you venture from the safety of the cities. That said, this is no underwater slugfest. You will make most of your credits by prospecting for crystals, metal, and pearls. You will be asked to carry out espionage missions, rescues, research, and even a prison break. You can decide not to accept any of these missions, or you can take anything that comes your way. Each race will base its attitude toward you on the missions you have carried out for and against them. In fact, last night the Bohine told me, "You suck." I got a little angry with them, so I planted a "Big Ears" bug on one of their subs to enable the Procha to hear what they were talking about. When they finished telling us their plans, I destroyed their sub with a homing missile. That'll teach 'em.

THE LONELY LIFE OF A SAILOR

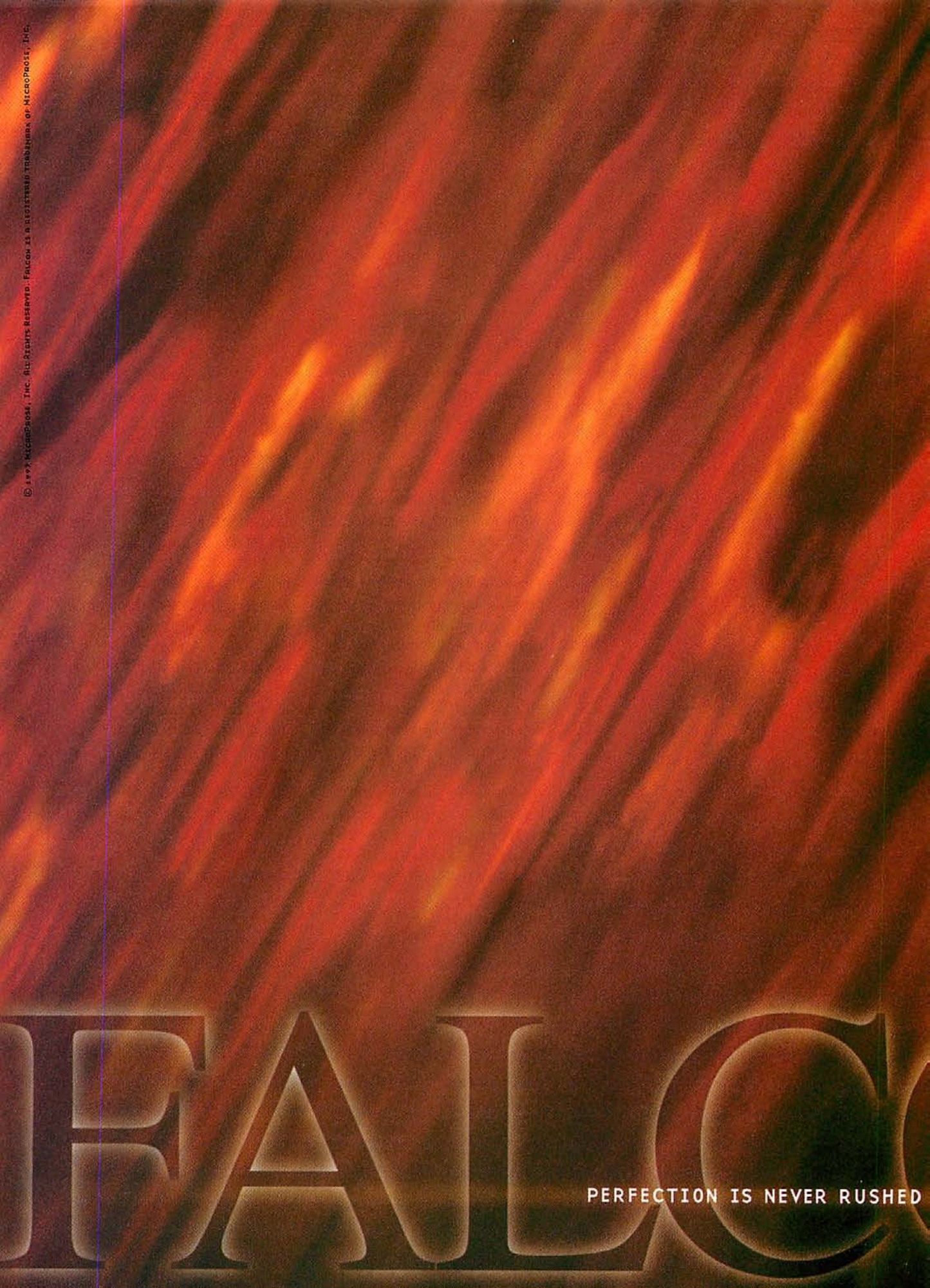
One thing you cannot do in SUB CULTURE is play with your friends online. There is no multiplayer mode in the game, nor does it look as though one will be added between now and the release date. To tell the truth, this is one of those games where I can understand that decision. "Hey, Joe, let's play SUB CULTURE on the Net and see who can collect bottle caps the fastest!" This is a game revolving around a complex plot, not an action game with a thin story behind it. Multiplayer battles would lack the charm and the entertainment value of the single-player game.

Overall, even from the beta, it's apparent that somebody really likes making this game. From the outstanding environment to the original premise and the thoroughly developed plot line, this is a solid product in the making. Even if you are a hard-core action gamer, you'll probably want to take a look at this game. There is enough action built into the plot to satisfy the action crowd, and enough plot built into the action to satisfy everyone else. My hat's off to the folks at Criterion for being on the right track toward one of the most original titles I've seen in a long time.



HECK OF A DOORMAT Some of the nicest people in town have minefields in their front yards, wouldn't you like one too?

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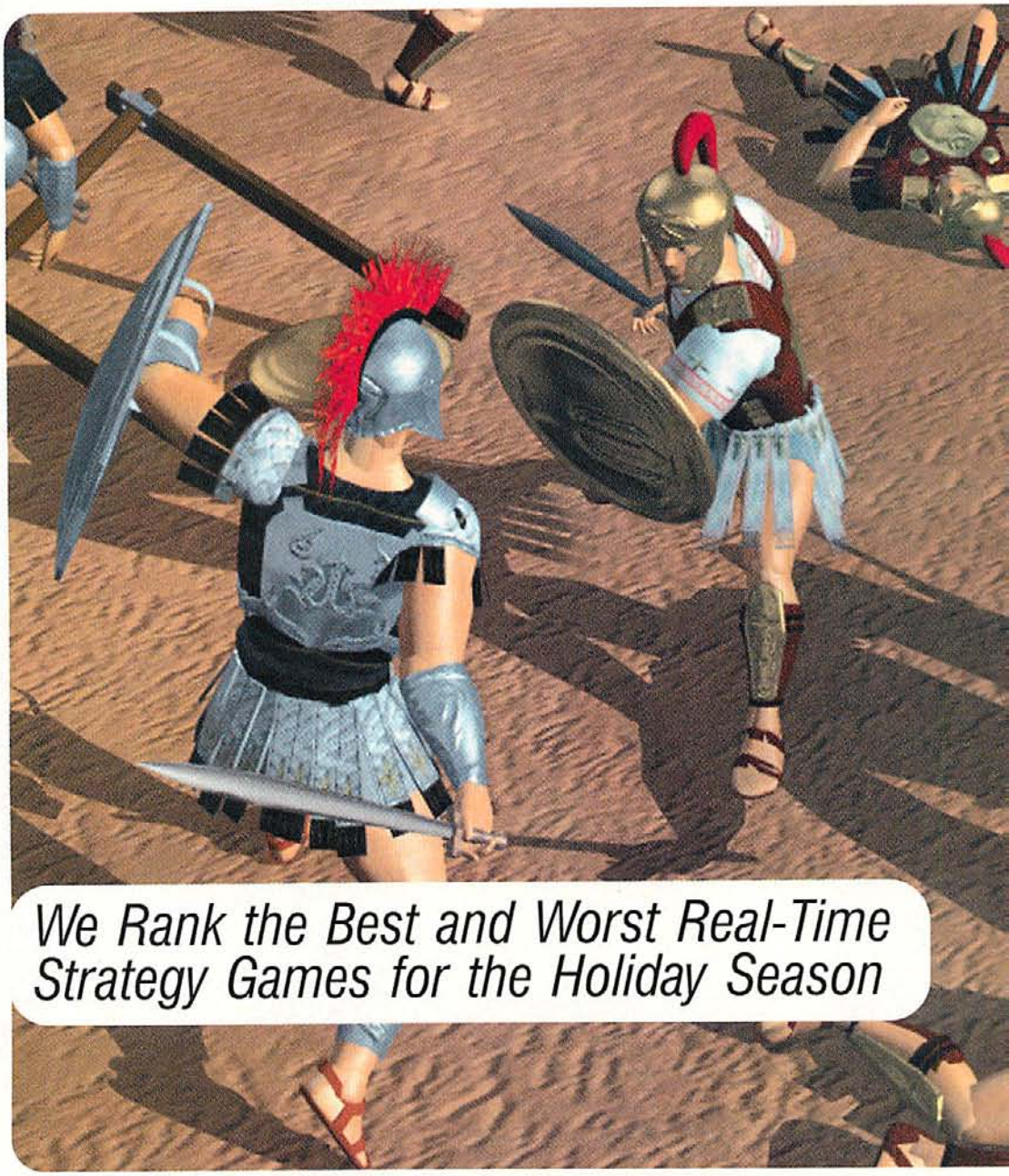


CIRCLE READER SERVICE #157

INDEX

7th Legion 172
Adhara 3 179
Age of Empires 196
Army Men 182
Battlezone 161
Chaos Island 189
Close Combat 2 166
Conquest Earth 168
Constructor 210
CyberStorm 2 182
Dark Colony 181
Dark Reign 157
Dominion 190
Earth 2140 192
Entrepreneur 208
Evolution 210
Extreme Tactics 175
Flying Nightmares 2 .. 161
Golgotha 161
Hidden Wars 175
KKND Xtreme 192
LEDWars 190
Lords of Magic 207
MechCommander 166
Myth: The Fallen Lords 163
NetStorm 172
Outpost 2 208
Pax Imperia: Eminent Domain 205
Populous: The Third Coming 200
Rebellion 199
Seven Kingdoms 205
Sid Meier's Gettysburg 160
SimCity 3000 200
StarCraft 150
Tone Rebellion 207
Total Annihilation 160
Uprising 161
War Inc. 190
War Wind II 181
WarBreeds 168
WarGames 179
Warhammer: Dark Omen 163
WarSport 189
Waterworld 192
RT Horizon 173
Reviews Index 204
Features Chart 186

REAL-TI



We Rank the Best and Worst Real-Time Strategy Games for the Holiday Season

ME



to KILL

by Elliott Chin

In the history of computer gaming, no genre of game has captured the imagination of gamers in as little time as real-time strategy games. True, we had a few real-time games in the early years—RAILROAD TYCOON ranks as a classic—but when COMMAND & CONQUER and WARCRAFT II debuted, they became instant hits, creating almost overnight the new category dubbed action/strategy, or real-time strategy, games. And after each game sold more than one million units within a year, a generation of clones quickly followed.

Already, nearly 20 clones have made it to market, yet none has come close to dethroning WARCRAFT II as the leader in real-time combat. This holiday season, that could change.

The biggest clone war to hit the PC, even bigger than the DOOM or MYST phenomenon, is about to be waged. There will be no fewer than 40 real-time strategy games competing for gamers' attentions this holiday season. All this fierce competition means, unfortunately, that many good games could get lost in the shuffle, but it also means you'll have plenty of good titles from which to choose. Many developers of the games in this roundup knew they'd be going head-to-head with the next WARCRAFT or COMMAND & CONQUER, so they worked to make their game even better. The result is a field of real-time strategy games that surpassed our expectations—games that truly advance this booming genre.

How We Ranked Them

To help you sort through the glut of real-time strategy games and decide what to buy and what to ignore, we've looked at preview versions of every game that's slated for a holiday release—as well as a few that aren't due until early 1998. Because we thought it unfair to directly compare a complex strategy game, such as REBELLION, to a tactical combat game, such as MYTH, we have divided the field into two categories: Tactical real-time games and Strategic real-time games. We have categorized, and then ranked, each game in comparison to the other games in its group.

We arrived at our rankings by answering a variety of questions: How much did we like the design? How well did the game play? Would it be released in time for the holiday season? After all, we intend this to be a buying guide, so it doesn't make sense for us to recommend a game that won't make it out by Christmas. Since all games are ranked, you'll know you can't go wrong with a Number 1 or Number 2 pick in either category. But be wary of the titles near the bottom of the list.

In each entry, we've summarized the game's premise; described the more impressive, innovative, or different features of gameplay; and highlighted any cool extras. We didn't include all features, simply because of space limitations, but we tried to capture what makes each game unique.

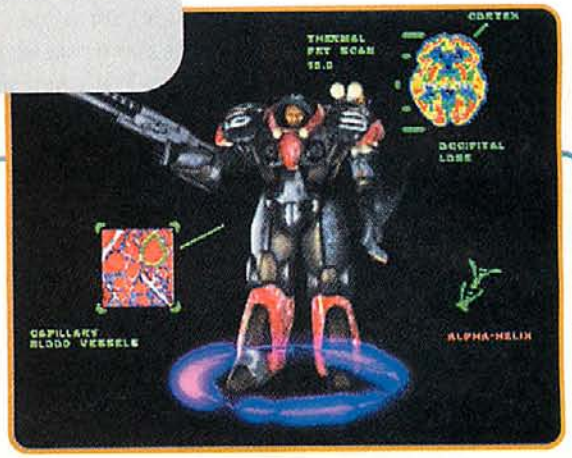
To give you a taste of what lies beyond the horizon, we've also listed the more exciting real-time titles coming later next year. And, we've reported on a few new games that are true hybrids of action and real-time strategy. Lastly, we've put together an index of all the real-time games we've ever reviewed and rated, just in case you want to go back and play the great games that started it all.

It's true that the sheer number of games can't be good for the market—a lot of good games will go unnoticed—but the competition will force the cream to the top. There can be only a few winners, but one of them will be you, the gamer.

Tactical Real-Time Games

Tactical real-time games are the ones we are most familiar with—think of DUNE II and WARCRAFT. Here, combat is the mainstay of gameplay. You harvest resources and build structures, but the goal is to amass enough troops to massacre your opponent. In most cases, the gameplay takes place using a single, constant engine: You build structures, recruit troops, and fight your enemies all in the same screen, unlike a game such as REBELLION, in which you build and recruit in a strategic screen, then jump to a tactical engine to resolve combat. Some of these games have strategic elements—CONQUEST EARTH, for example, has an X-COM–like strategic overlay to the combat—but since they emphasize the tactical combat as the majority of the gameplay, they fall into the tactical category.

1 StarCraft



Category: Tactical
Developer/Publisher: Blizzard
www.blizzard.com
ETA: November 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 8

Premise: In the far reaches of space, three races are locked in a vicious battle. The main participants are the highly advanced Protoss and the hive-like Zerg. The nomadic and scavenging Terrans are caught in the middle, as unwitting pawns and cannon fodder. As the leader of any one of these three races, you must defeat your two enemies.

Gameplay: STARCRAFT is the one real-time strategy game that has the whole gaming world waiting anxiously. It takes the traditional real-time model of WARCRAFT II and adds evolutionary steps in game design—way points, queuing production, formations—as well as more innovative qualities.

As with most Blizzard games, the design team doesn't stop tinkering until the game goes out the door, and resource management is one of those design elements that remains fluid. In our Fall Preview in September, we reported that there would be only one resource to harvest, but that you would be able to refine it to create a second resource. Since then, Blizzard has changed the resource model again.

Now, there will be two resource types:



THE PROS HAVE IT This shot illustrates the more blended look of the fog of war. In the final version, you probably won't find a Protoss carrier in the land combat.

Creature Features

Among StarCraft's many features are the experience and role-playing elements. You'll be able to carry units over from battle to battle, and your units will grow in experience. However, these abilities won't be enough to unbalance the game; they will probably simply equate to better defense and survivability. All units will be able to carry items in inventory that can bestow special abilities. You will also be able to upgrade units with weapons, armor, and shields to a higher degree than in WarCraft II.

There will be dynamic lighting, translucencies, and shimmering transparencies for the cloaking units. The fog of war will be blended, to make for a more realistic darkness effect.

Finally, StarCraft will include command queuing. That means you can issue a unit several orders at once, in addition to queuing the production of units.

These are by no means all of StarCraft's features. Though it will debut much later in the year than many other real-time games, it will definitely be worth the wait. Any serious real-time gaming fans will want to catch a ride on this ship.



ore and gas. Terrans and Protoss will mine gas by building an extractor on top of a gas mine, at which point harvesting vehicles can go in and take resources. But the Zerg will be able to enter gas mines and directly harvest the resources, eliminating the need to build an extractor. For ore, the Zerg will need to infest a mine, while Terrans and Protoss can mine it directly. Also, the harvesting units will carry resources in their inventory so if you destroy resource-carrying units, you'll be able to strip the resources from them.

In both land and space combat, there will also be neutral outposts, with whom the Terrans and Protoss can trade for supplies. The Zerg, however, will need to attack the outposts to plunder the supplies.

Installation combat (the third type of combat aside from land and space skirmishes) won't involve any resource gathering, but you will sometimes have to use and combine items. Installation battles will be more goal-oriented and will include role-playing elements. In these cases, you'll be given a set number of troops and a specific goal. These missions will figure prominently in the story, as you could meet up with unique characters and engage in dialogue before blasting your enemies. In contrast, land and space battles will be more traditional grand battles in the WarCraft II style.

Extras: StarCraft will have modem, LAN, and Internet support for up to eight gamers. On battle.net, StarCraft will provide support for clans, rankings, and gamer handicapping. Blizzard also plans to include in the game a campaign editor that has the intuitive interface of the WarCraft II editor, but adds more power so you can string together scenarios, create variable victory conditions, and record your own voices.

The Triumvirate

Each race will have a different storyline that tells one part of a grand story, which weaves its way through Terran, Zerg, and Protoss history. Each race has its own strengths and weaknesses, demanding a different style of gameplay.

Terrans will be most familiar to WarCraft II fans. They will have no restrictions on where and how they build structures. They will also enjoy several benefits, such as having mobile buildings and the ability to scavenge resources from hulks and debris. However, they will lack the Zerg's prolific reproduction and the Protoss' psionic powers.

The Zerg will be a hivelike race. All Zerg units begin play as larvae, spawned from the hatchery. As you expand, both your larvae and buildings will create a blanket of Creep, a substance required for building Zerg structures. Zerg units will be more plentiful than those of the other races; you'll always hatch two Zerglings from the base larvae, and all units will be cheaper in comparison to the other races. The Zerg will also have special abilities, including regeneration and burrowing. Offsetting that will be the hive mind, which requires that you keep many omniscient, floating Overlord units on hand to control your hordes.

The Protoss will be the most difficult race to master because they are few in number but powerful. Most units will have shields and more powerful ranged weapons, as well as cloaking technology. In addition, Protoss units will have psionic powers, which will function similarly to the spells in WarCraft II. The new feature here is that you can cast psionic power from groups of units. The Protoss have to maintain the Khala, a psionic link to the their homeworld, which can restrict their growth. You will need to build pylons to channel the Khala in order to link your structures together. Without these pylons, Protoss buildings will be bereft of psionic energy and rendered ineffectual.



FRESH MEAT The Zerg are the most vicious of the three races in Blizzard's StarCraft. Each race will have a different look, interface, and abilities.


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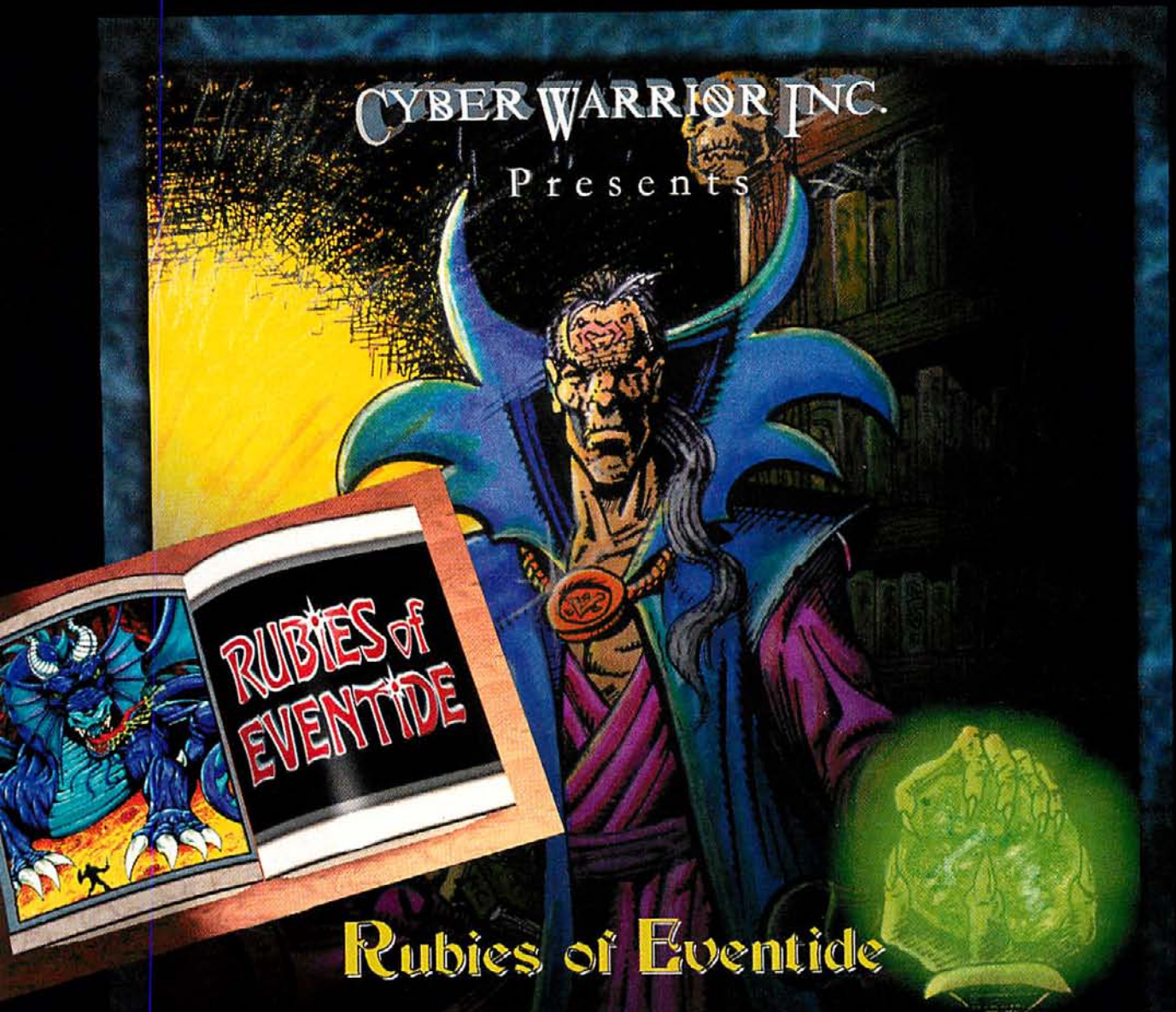


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2 Dark Reign

Category: Tactical
Developer: Auran
Publisher: Activision
www.activision.com
ETA: September 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 8



MOVE OUT Here is an example of the waypoint setting.

Premise: For ages the war between the Imperium and the Freedom Guard has consumed the galaxy, destroying everything in its wake. One world ravaged by the galaxy-wide war was the Togran homeworld. Only a few have survived the planet's destruction, but as one of the lucky, you drift in space and chance upon a probe left by Togra, the legendary founder of your people. Inside are instructions for traveling back in time and eliminating the Freedom Guard–Imperium threat before it begins. When you enter the probe, you find all the recorded battles between the Imperium and the Freedom Guard. You must play all their battles and familiarize yourself with both sides' weaponry and strategies, for once the probe arrives in the past, you will have to fight the combined might of the two warring factions in one final battle.

Gameplay: DARK REIGN is an innovative real-time strategy game that strives for increased depth, complexity, and realism. Many games in this roundup have tried simply to make themselves more fun or more action-oriented, but DARK REIGN seeks to advance the genre.

Activision has ensured that the game will be easy to pick up and provides a detailed tutorial to walk you through the enhancements, such as waypoints, formations, and an AI you can customize. The two campaigns are well designed, challenging, and well paced.

Some of the game's most striking enhancements are the terrain and AI. The terrain fully affects combat: Units attack better on higher ground, elevation affects your line of sight, and your movement varies over different terrain. You can set waypoints and save paths. And you can also toggle your units' AI, telling them roughly when to retreat and how far to follow an opponent, among other commands.

As for resources, you harvest water to provide cash for buildings and units, and crystals to power your buildings. When you build, you can adopt either the WARCRAFT model (each barracks builds one unit) or the C&C model (each barracks increases the speed at which you build from one central barracks).

These aren't all the cool features in DARK REIGN, but we have no problem recommending that you try the game to see just how many more there are.

Extras: Certain troops in DARK REIGN possess some very special abilities. Some units can morph themselves into any object on the map to escape detection, some can burrow under the ground to transport troops, while others can camouflage themselves to blend into the surroundings. One unit, the Infiltrator, can even steal enemy plans, enabling you to build enemy vehicles.

DARK REIGN will have a robust scenario editor. There will be support for four-player Internet play over Activision's active.net, eight-player games over LAN, and two-player modem and serial play. During multiplayer games, you can make alliances and trade units and resources.



EDITING TOOLS This is the Construction Kit, DARK REIGN's scenario editor.

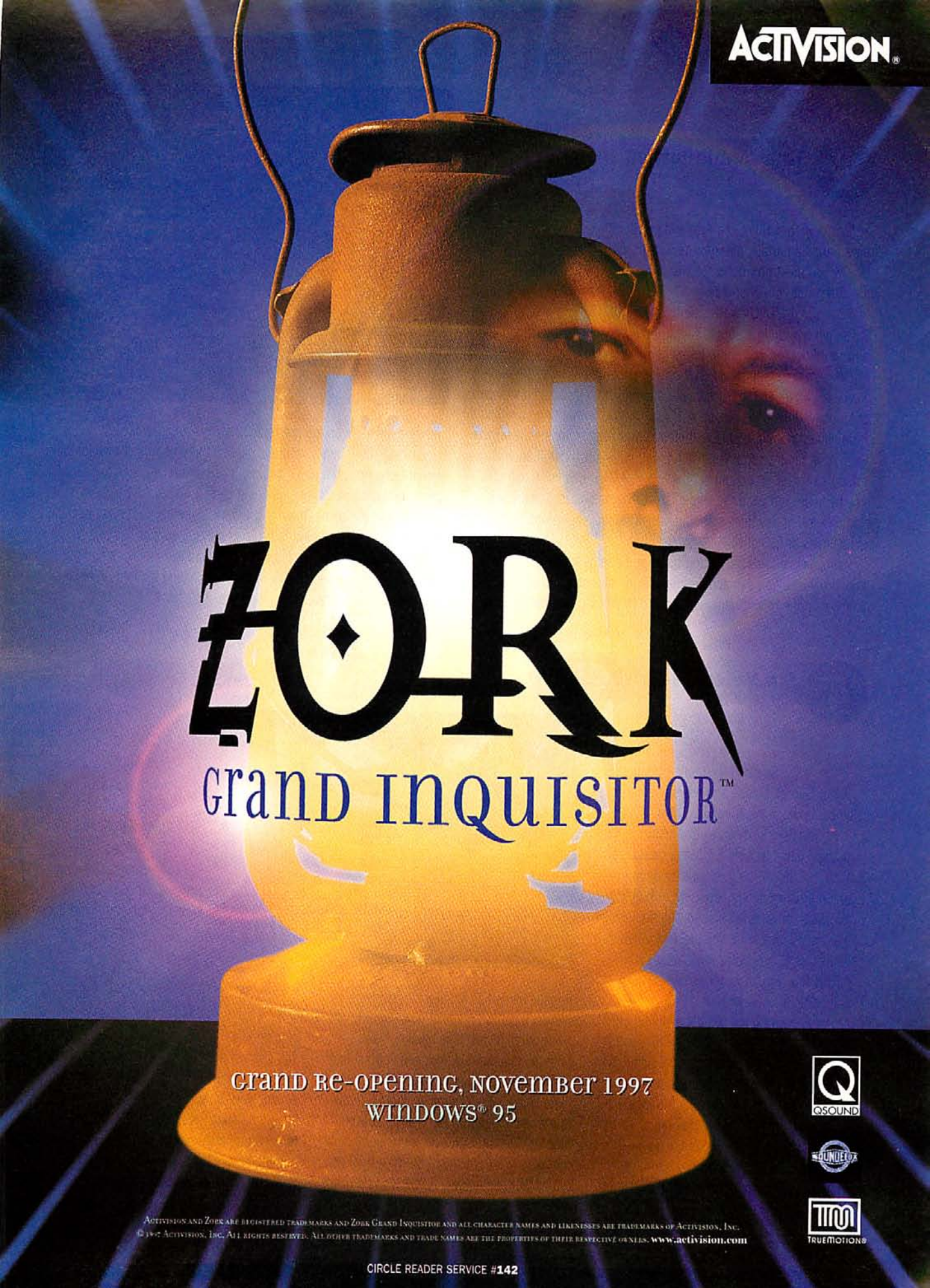


BRIEFING Here are the basic orders and commands; behind the advanced tab are even more AI instructions.



Actual 360° views from the game.

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3 Total Annihilation



Category: Tactical
Developer: Cave Dog
Publisher: GT Interactive
www.cavedog.com
ETA: October 1997
Engine: 3D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 8

Premise: Two sides, the Arm and the Core, have waged a terrible, galaxy-wide war for millennia. You must now bring the war to its end as commander of either side.

Gameplay: Like DARK REIGN and STARCRAFT, TOTAL ANNIHILATION is a truly impressive third-generation real-time game, adding innovation and depth to the genre.

The game is completely 3D, though it isn't as striking as MYTH or POPULOUS. However, the 3D terrain does mean that terrain is a vital part of strategy. Units will move up hills slowly, have farther firing ranges from higher ground, and have their line of sight affected by the terrain. Each object in the terrain is distinct, so that if you shoot at an enemy through a forest, you could set fire to a tree. That tree will touch off nearby trees, and soon the whole forest may be ablaze. The fire will damage you or any units standing near it, as will explosions from nearby enemies or friendlies.

Gameplay involves harvesting metal and energy for building units and structures. You can acquire metal from downed units and metal patches on the map. Energy is obtained by placing different types of power generators on the map (each has its own advantages).

Extras: TOTAL ANNIHILATION lets gamers build dozens of units on different technology tracks. Of course, if you devote attention to one track to the exclusion of others, you could be at a disadvantage. As with all decisions in this game, there is give and take that you have to consider. TOTAL ANNIHILATION will have four-player Internet support, as well as eight-player LAN, and two-player modem and serial play. To find out more about this game's raft of features (including the innovative commander unit), visit Cave Dog's Web site.

4 Sid Meier's Gettysburg



Category: Tactical
Developer: Firaxis
Publisher: Electronic Arts
www.firaxis.com
ETA: October 1997
Engine: 3D
Resource Management: No
Building: No
Setting: American Civil War
Multiplayer Max: 2

Premise: Strap on the boots of Robert E. Lee or George Meade and relive the climactic battle of the American Civil War.

Gameplay: GETTYSBURG is a historical strategy game as only Sid Meier could create it. You don't worry about managing the Union or Confederate economy, or building ironclads, or whether Joshua Chamberlain's mustache is too long. You just line up your troops, let all hell break loose near Little Round Top, and, in general, have a whale of a good time.

Those desiring the tactical minutiae of Talonsoft's BATTLEGROUND series will have to adjust a bit. Sid doesn't bother detailing the differences between shotguns and rifled muskets, for example, choosing to focus instead on the morale and training of each of the famous units depicted in the game. If you choose to defend "good ground," as Meade did, you'll soon discover how the Iron Brigade earned its moniker.

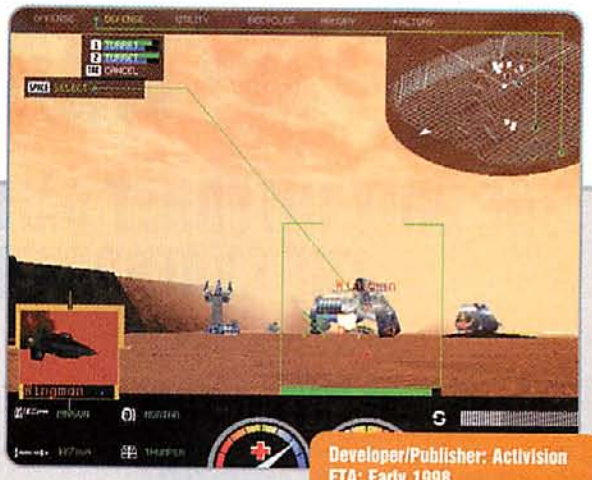
A lot has been made of how Sid has "rediscovered" real-time gaming. Aside from the fact that Sid designed PIRATES! and RAILROAD TYCOON (not to mention numerous flight sims), he isn't simply jumping on the real-time bandwagon. GETTYSBURG doesn't play like C&C or WARCRAFT with smoothbore muskets. In order to win, you must think like a Civil War commander: When do I pull back my flank? Will a bayonet charge save the position at Devil's Den? Can Pickett survive the Union cannon fire long enough to reach the summit of the ridge?

Extras: GETTYSBURG offers dynamic campaigns for both the Confederate and Union sides, along with hypothetical battles, such as a victorious Lee striking toward Washington. Both LAN and Internet play should be supported, along with the option to generate random battles so that green commanders are on more even footing with Civil War scholars. —*Terry Coleman*

Strategy Hybrids

Neither Strategy nor Action, These Games Are a New Genre of Gaming

Many real-time strategy games have improved the genre by adding more realism and strategic depth, but several games are taking the genre in a whole new direction. These games put gamers on the battlefield as commanders in a first-person perspective. The results are strategy hybrids, combining aspects of real-time strategy and action or flight-simulation games.



Developer/Publisher: Activision
ETA: Early 1998
Setting: Sci-fi

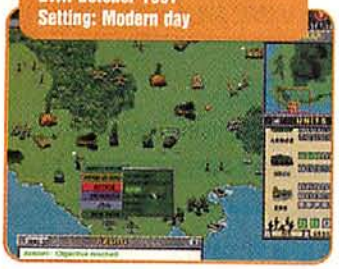
Battlezone

According to Activision, BATTLEZONE's gameplay is 70 percent action, 30 percent strategy. The game is in first-person view, using a very enhanced INTERSTATE '76 engine. But instead of muscle cars, you're flying space vehicles with much more exact and fluid controls than the clunky cars of the 1970s. In fact, the controls and play mechanics are very QUAKE-like, and Activision is stressing that quick fingers and reflexes will be required to win the day.

BATTLEZONE easily has the best interface for controlling strategy: It uses a 3D topographical map to keep track of all your units, and an intuitive keyboard-based command interface to direct units. For more on BATTLEZONE, see our full-blown Sneak Preview in this issue.

Developer/Publisher: Eidos
ETA: October 1997
Setting: Modern day

Flying Nightmares 2



FLYING NIGHTMARES 2 is a hybrid flight simulator and strategy game. When played solo, FN2 drops you into a Cuban campaign in which you fly Harrier jets and Cobra helicopters to try to protect the base at Guantánamo. In multiplayer mode, up to 16 gamers can take to the skies in virtual combat. One person on each side acts as Commandant. This portion of the game is essentially a slower-paced real-time strategy game, with some of your units under your teammates' control. The Commandant can jump into a cockpit and join the action, but to really succeed you'll want a strategy gamer at the helm who won't leave his post unattended.

Developer: Cyclone Studios
Publisher: 3DO
ETA: Late 1997
Setting: Sci-fi

Uprising



UPRISING was the first game we heard about that merged the action and strategy game genres.

UPRISING has the most strategy gaming of this group, as you have all the traditional elements of real-time strategy gaming: resource management, structure building, unit creation, and troop command.

The gameplay is nearly all first-person, though there is an overview map for taking quick looks at the action from an overhead perspective. But you don't really play in this mode. UPRISING, unlike BATTLEZONE or GOLGOTHA, doesn't assume you are stuck in a single command vehicle. Instead, you can switch between units, so you can take control of a turret, the building vehicle, or a fighter craft.

Developer: Crack.com
Publisher: TBD
ETA: Early 1998
Setting: Modern day

Golgotha



GOLGOTHA, like BATTLEZONE and UPRISING, plays as an action game, but the strategy portion is much more accessible. This game provides two viewing modes, top-down for controlling units and first-person for face-to-face action. The result is a game that combines the features of both action and strategy gaming, but doesn't require gamers to master a new set of complicated controls.

You play the game mostly from the perspective of your supertank, but you can still purchase new units and see the map in an overview window on the side of the screen. When you need to command units, you simply jump to the top-down perspective, issue orders, and then return to your tank to take part in the action. For more information, see Gamespot's detailed preview at **www.gamespot.com**.

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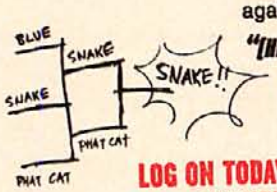
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What the CDI said about HEAT being the only network to award frequent player points (Degrees) that can be redeemed for prizes:

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5 Myth: The Fallen Lords



Category: Tactical
Developer/Publisher: Bungie
www.bungie.com
ETA: Late 1997
Engine: 3D
Resource Management: No
Building: No
Setting: Fantasy
Multiplayer Max: 16

Premise: As a commander of the forces of Light, you must lead a legion of troops against the might of the evil Fallen Lords.

Gameplay: MYTH is a great-looking game with a narrow focus: combat. This isn't a bad thing; in fact, for those bloodthirsty tactical souls, it's welcome relief. The game is all about tactical combat. The campaign comprises various missions in which you are handed a band of warriors and instructed to fight the Fallen Lords' minions or to complete some special task. The engine used in the missions is astounding, fully 3D, with great graphics, and completely interactive terrain that affects and is affected by you. The engine employs a real physics model, which makes for more realistic combat and effects. There will also be weather effects, a dynamic camera, and dynamic lighting.

The campaign should be well designed, with some aspects dependent on your previous performance. If you lose too many troops in one mission, for example, you may be crippled in the next because of lack of forces. On the other hand, if you manage to trounce all the enemies in one mission, you could ensure that the enemies in a later scenario are robbed of reinforcements.

The storyline behind MYTH is also first-rate, telling a nontraditional tale of good versus evil in a dark fantasy world. The story is so rich that each individual unit will have a name and a history.

Extras: MYTH will have great support for multiplayer gaming as well as 3D cards. There will be Internet, LAN, modem, and serial play, but the Internet capabilities are the most seductive of all. You'll be able to play over Bungie's free online-gaming service, as well as on the commercial gaming services. On Bungie's metaserver, all players will have their wins and losses continuously recorded and ranked, allowing people to sort gamers by skill.

6 Warhammer: Dark Omen

Premise: Fresh from your victory over the Skaven in WARHAMMER 1, you, Morgan Bernhardt, now lead your forces into battle against the increasing Orcish menace and the growing undead might of the Dread King.

Category: Tactical
Developer: Mindscape
Publisher: Electronic Arts
www.mindscape.com
ETA: January 1998
Engine: 3D
Resource Management: No
Building: No
Setting: Fantasy
Multiplayer Max: 2



Gameplay: DARK OMEN is the sequel to WARHAMMER: SHADOW OF THE HORNED RAT and is a leap forward in both engine and gameplay. Gameplay consists of the tactical combat engine, which is full 3D, and the strategic overlay, which has role-playing influences. In the strategy/RPG portion of the game, you meet with NPCs, decide which of several missions to undertake, recruit additional troops, and nurse your wounded. This role-playing aspect—with its evolving story, NPC interaction, and branching missions—is DARK OMEN's most appealing feature.

The combat is strictly tactical, without any resource management or building, though there is impressive magic. In each scenario, you get a set number of units, the exact amount of which is influenced by your performance in previous missions and by whether you've hired or recruited more troops during the strategy/role-playing portion of the game. Maps are smaller than in SOTHR, to better facilitate immediate action and eliminate the need to scroll around a big map. The interface has been streamlined and the game sped up considerably, creating a more fluid and intense combat experience.

Extras: DARK OMEN, in addition to its immersive role playing and story, is technologically impressive. The engine is full 3D, with 16-bit color and support for MMX and all major 3D cards (it's best with Voodoo and Power VR). DARK OMEN, unlike SOTHR, will have serial, modem, and network support for head-to-head play.

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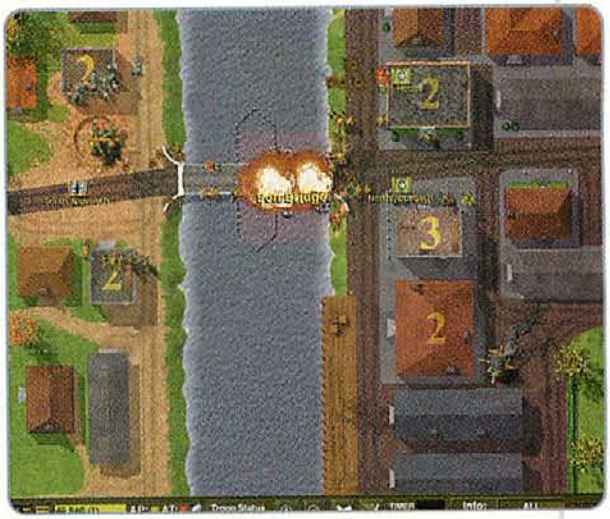
IF HELICOPTERS FAIL,

BRING IN THE NEGOTIATION TEAM.



CIRCLE READER SERVICE #357

7 Close Combat 2: A Bridge Too Far



Category: Tactical
Developer: Atomic Games
Publisher: Microsoft
www.microsoft.com
ETA: September 1997
Engine: 3D
Resource Management: No
Building: No
Setting: World War II
Multiplayer Max: 2

Premise: Return to one of World War II's most hotly contested European battles, the Arnhem Campaign, assuming command of either Allied or Axis forces in several fascinating single-battle scenarios and an extremely versatile campaign.

Gameplay: Where some of us complained that the original CLOSE COMBAT was winnable by literally doing nothing, CLOSE COMBAT 2 will force you into action. Where some of us suggested that CC's terrain elements and maps seemed blocky, crude, and archaic, CC2 has maps that are attractive, functional, and almost pedantically researched from WWII aerial maps. Where some of us complained that CC had an entirely negative psychological model, in which soldiers would start out at maximum strength and could only get worse, CC2 features a psychological model that can work for you as well as against you.

In every way, CLOSE COMBAT 2 is far superior to the original. Those who enjoyed the challenge of the continuous combat featured in CLOSE COMBAT will thrill to the more logical enemy AI of the hot-and-heavy combat in CC2. Those who reveled in the command perspective of sending troops to take individual and manageable objectives in CC should relish the idea that every battle in the CC2 campaign counts and that shepherding surviving troops from one battle to another means that your troops (and chances of winning) will get better. Would-be commanders who savored the realism of having troops run away in CC will get doubly excited when a group of CC2 soldiers suddenly goes into "heroic" morale status and increases in combat effectiveness.

Extras: CLOSE COMBAT 2 will have standard multiplayer support, as well as Internet play over Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone.

—Johnny Wilson

8 MechCommander

Category: Tactical
Developer: FASA Interactive
Publisher: MicroProse
www.microprose.com
ETA: Early 1998
Engine: 3D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: No
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 6

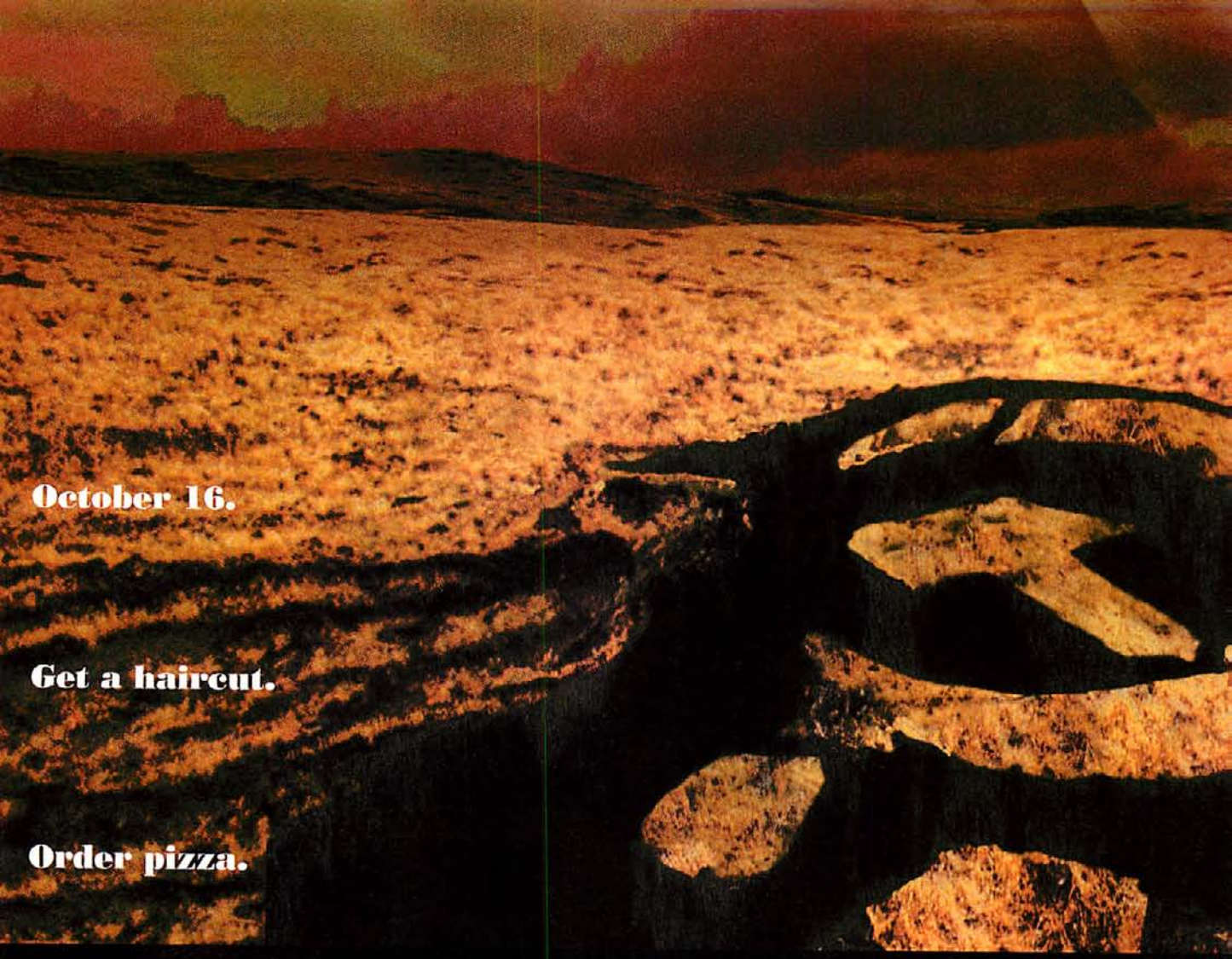
Premise: MECHCOMMANDER features you as a commander in the *BattleTech* universe during a strong counterinvasion against the Clans.

Gameplay: Instead of being couched inside the cockpit of your 'mech, you'll be in a command post, directing the battle remotely. The battles themselves will take place in realistic 3D terrain (fans of the Geo-Hex miniatures terrain will immediately recognize the inspiration) and, unlike many real-time strategy games, your 'mechs will not be throw-away units. Pilots improve their skill over time; dead 'mechs are salvageable; and you have limited, but replenishable ammunition.

The subordinate AI looks like it will be smarter than your usual minions, and you'll have the chance to change it if you don't think so. The AI will be somewhat customizable. Each mechwarrior under your command will be rated for such things as Professionalism (How "by the book" am I?), Decorum (Do I kick a guy when he's down?), Aggressiveness (How stupid will I be when the odds are against me?), and Courage (similar to Aggressiveness, but not as tied to odds). Also, the AI code is written in such a way that people who have no trouble developing DOOM wads should be able to build their own AI components. However, there won't be a built-in editor or interface to assist you.

Extras: Plans are developing for online play in which gamers will be able to build custom forces and face competitors with an equivalent or near-equivalent Battle Rating (derived from the amount of tonnage and firepower in the 'mechs you've chosen). As of press time, we haven't seen anything concrete. *—Johnny Wilson*





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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #160

9 Conquest Earth

Category: Tactical
Developer: Data Design Interactive
Publisher: Eidos
www.eidos.com
ETA: October 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 8

Premise: The inhabitants of Jupiter have invaded Earth, attempting to terraform it into a silicon-based world for their colonization. The Jovians must ensure the process succeeds; the humans have to repel the alien invasion.

Gameplay: CONQUEST EARTH emphasizes the action part of the action/strategy real-time genre. There is resource harvesting and building, but one of the most compelling features of the game should appeal to action fans: You can actually take control of your units, move them, and direct their fire as in an action game. Everything still occurs in the top-down perspective, but this greater degree of control adds a more immediate sense of action.

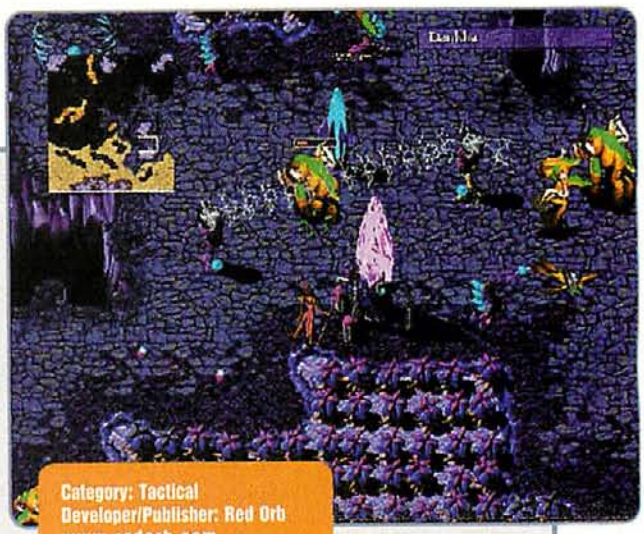
The Jovians will have an organic look to their interface, complete with wiggling pipes and eyelidlike windows. The humans, on the other hand, have a machinelike interface. In terms of gameplay, the humans will construct their vehicles, but the Jovians will actually create vehicles by combining and morphing into larger troops, tanks, or aircraft.



During campaign play, there is a strategic portion similar to that in X-COM, in which you have to watch the planet for signs of alien invasion while you research new units and fortify bases around the globe. Once you've spotted an alien infestation, you zoom down to the planet and conduct battles in the tactical mode, using the units you've researched previously. You can play the entire game without using this mode, but it adds a strategic dimension to complement the mainly action-oriented gameplay.

Extras: One of the most exciting features in CONQUEST EARTH is the great interface. You can save locations on the side viewports and always keep an eye on your key installations or troops. With day and night missions and multiplayer support, CONQUEST EARTH should be one of the better real-time games in this crowded field.

10 WarBreeds



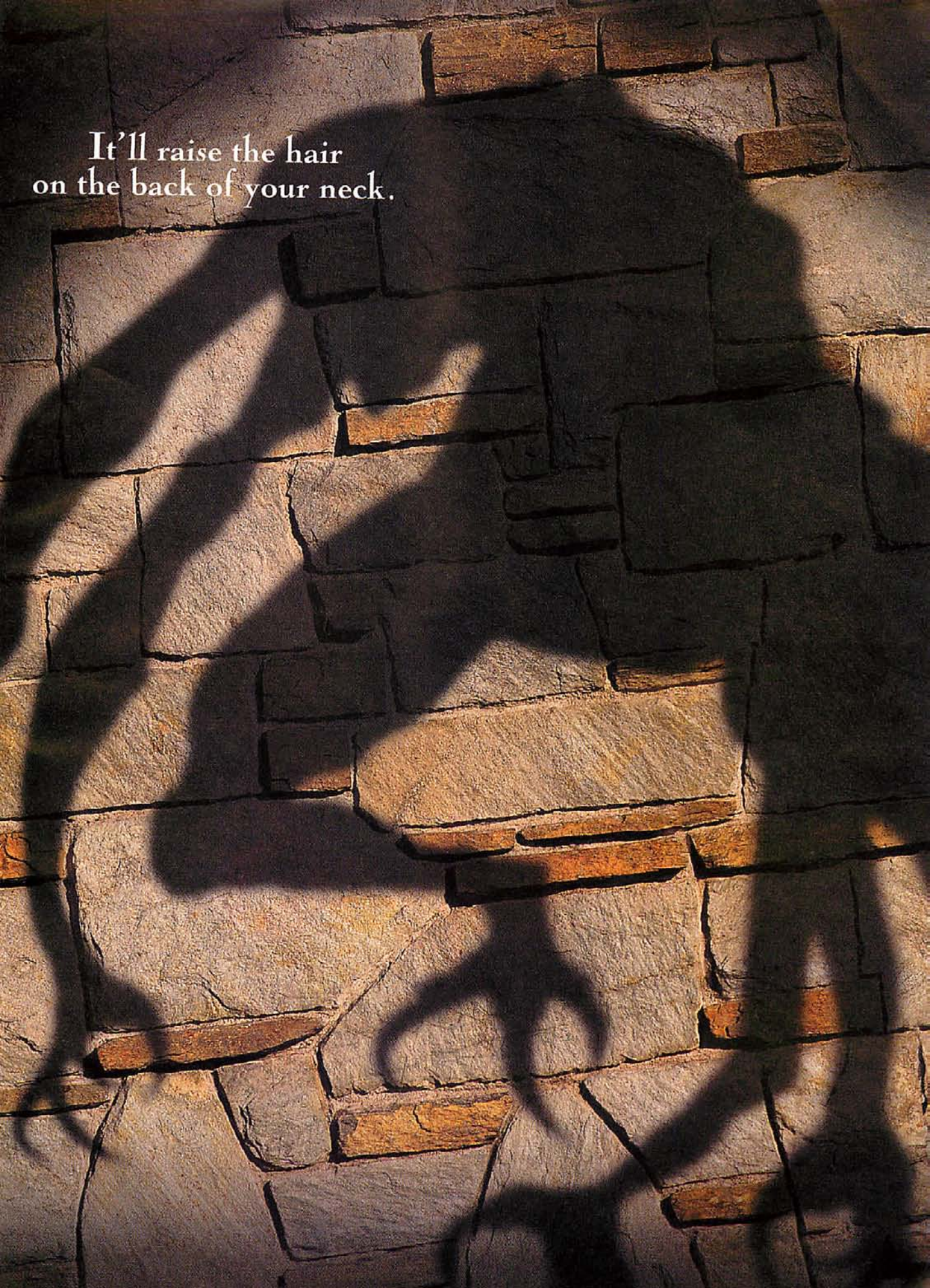
Category: Tactical
Developer/Publisher: Red Orb
www.redorb.com
ETA: Early 1998
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 8

Premise: In a futuristic alien world, an ancient race crafted a variety of children. Their most ferocious offspring broke free and slew the creators. Years later, the other created races are now at war, with the threat of the evil first-born looming ever-constant on the horizon.

Gameplay: There are quite a few unique twists in WARBREEDS, including the way it handles unit creation and resource management. As in other real-time games, you start with a few units, harvest resources, build structures, recruit more troops, and engage in tumultuous battles. However, the resource model is much more intricate and, frankly, more impressive. You harvest crops, but you also get to plant them. So after depleting a supply of crops, you can plant more and harvest anew. You get to choose which of a variety of crops to plant, a decision that will in part be affected by the changing seasons.

When it is time to train units, you'll also encounter a twist. You can breed your own units by crossing your race's storehouse of DNA with that of your enemy's. When you kill an enemy unit, you can inspect and analyze its DNA, adding it to your pool of knowledge. During unit creation, you return to that pool and custom-design a being by combining various traits. Each of the four races will have its own special abilities, strengths, and weaknesses. The combinations are incredible, matched only by those in EXTREME TACTICS.

Extras: Red Orb is trying to craft an internally consistent and immersive game universe for WARBREEDS, even going so far as to create an actual language for the aliens on paper so that when they speak, it has structure and believability. There will be multiplayer support and an Internet-play matching service via Red Orb's Web site.


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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #189

11 7th Legion



Category: Tactical
Developer: Epic Megagames
Publisher: MicroProse
www.microprose.com
ETA: October 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: No
Building: Yes
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 6

Premise: You are the leader of the 7th Legion, most powerful of Earth's seven armies, locked in battle with the Chosen, technologically superior humans who fled Earth centuries ago and have returned to reclaim their homeworld.

Gameplay: 7TH LEGION is a fast and fun real-time strategy game with a fresh take on the genre. You must build structures and armies to battle your opponent, but there is no resource management. Of course, buildings and troops cost money, but the way to get cash is to kill, not harvest. For every kill you make, you earn cash. The more powerful the opponent, the more money you get. You can then use your cash to build factories and barracks. This dynamic means that no one ever has to quit in frustration when they run out of money; all you need do is go on a killing spree and you're solvent again, with money available for creating a bigger army.

The interface is one of the most intuitive in our roundup. In addition, gamers can specify unit behavior, such as how far to pursue opponents and to what degree orders to move will be disobeyed in favor of firing back at encountered opponents.

Extras: Playing cards add another twist to the gameplay in 7TH LEGION. These special items are found about the map and are placed in a hand at the top of the screen. When you play a card, a special effect will ensue. There are numerous cards, with a plethora of effects, from healing to berserker bonuses to instant destruction of all troops (including your own). 7TH LEGION will have LAN, modem, and serial support, as well as Internet play.

12 NetStorm

Category: Tactical
Developer: Titanic
Publisher: Activision
www.activision.com
ETA: Late 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Fantasy
Multiplayer Max: 8

Premise: You own a floating island in the atmosphere of a fantasy world, where the godlike Furies—Thunder, Rain, and Wind—engage in titanic battles. Battling against other islands, you sacrifice enemy leaders to the Furies to gain more knowledge and power.

Gameplay: NETSTORM is admittedly a strange and different kind of game. In order to harvest the game's resource (storm power), you need to build bridges to the floating storm geysers using TETRIS-like pieces (a fun brainteaser on its own).

Combat is very different, as there are no moving military pieces to command. Battles occur when you put in place offensive weaponry such as cannons and explosive discus throwers, which operate on their own. The strategy comes from deciding where to place your weaponry, and responding to your enemy's placements by deploying counterweaponry and defenses. And since the weapons act independently, you have to take into account the capabilities, intelligence, and preferences of each piece before you place it.

The object of battle is to carve a path to the enemy priest, whom you capture and sacrifice to the Furies to gain hidden knowledge (read: additional buildings and units).

On the down side, hard-core wargamers might feel cheated by not being able to command stationary units and may be dismayed at their attack procedures.

Extras: The design of NETSTORM, while different, is fresh and fun. It's also perfect for Internet play. Hundreds of gamers will be able to play over active.net (Activision's online gaming service) in dozens of arenas, each with multiple islands that can support eight gamers in a single deathmatch. NETSTORM will also have an RPG-like aspect, with the islands growing in level and the priests growing in knowledge.



1998 Real-Time Horizon

A Glance at the Upcoming Fourth-Generation Titles of 1998



JAGGED ALLIANCE 2

The obvious question on gamers' minds is "What about WarCraft III and C&C 2?" Most games covered in our roundup are Christmas 1997 or early 1998 releases. There are, however, many more real-time strategy games in development for later next year, and this is where WC III, C&C 2, and a few other games fall.

Mid 1998

The most promising early title in the works is Sir-Tech's Jagged Alliance 2, which will offer turn-based and real-time gameplay. There will be more mercenaries and more tactical depth, along with multiplayer support and improved graphics. Look for it in April 1998.

Interplay will release MAX 2 in the early part of the year. This sequel will offer real-time play in addition to turn-based and simultaneous play. It will also feature 16-bit color, updated graphics, streamlined gameplay for easier real-time gaming, and aliens.



MAX 2

Interplay has another game, tentatively titled Dead Space, due out in early to mid-1998. This one includes real-time battles in space and on planet surfaces with fully customizable ships and units. Newcomer Soundsource Interactive will release an "aliens vs. humans" real-time game in early 1998 as well.

EA will follow KKND Xtreme with KKND 2 sometime in the spring.

Late 1998

Westwood plans to release the third C&C game, Command & Conquer 2: Tiberiun Sun, in the summer of 1998. Not much is known, but Westwood intends to create a whole new engine for the game (probably 3D), as well as take the battle into the future of the first C&C game. We'll have a preview of the game as soon as we hear more.

ION Storm and Todd Porter plan to release their real-time strategy game, Doppleganger, in mid-1998.

In late 1998, 3DO is slated to release Third Dominion, which will be a top-down strategy game with a 3D engine.

Also coming in late 1998 are Interplay's *Star Trek* real-time game, Star Fleet Command, set in the classic *Trek* era, and Conquest of the New World II, which is moving to real-time.

WarCraft III is slated for an early 1999 release, so don't hold your breath. It will pick up where WarCraft Adventures leaves off. Apart from that, Blizzard isn't talking.

As we learn more about these titles and other real-time games that surface, we'll bring you up-to-date news stories and previews.

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13 Extreme Tactics

Premise: On the planet Calibria, natural resources have become so scarce that only one clan can survive, leading to global warfare between the Hammerhawk and Bloodfox clans.

Gameplay: What makes EXTREME TACTICS stand apart is that you can completely customize the game's units and AI. As in most other real-time strats, you start with a central construction yard unit, and churn out units for resource-hunting and defense. You can produce cookie-cutter units, but you can also—unlike in most other games—design your own units from scratch, using a number of basic chassis and a wide variety of weapons, defenses, and special equipment. The number of possible variations is immense, and the components tend to foster balanced designs, thus preventing runaway killers. You can likewise configure your units' AI—including when to retreat, how far to pursue enemies, and how to target opponents—and rename these configurations to personalize your army.

Category: Tactical
Developer/Publisher: Media Station
www.mediastation.com
ETA: November 1997
Engine: 3D/2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: No
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 8



There is no structure building in the game, though there is resource gathering. The resources are energy and metal, the latter of which you get from natural desposits or by scavenging scrap metal from destroyed vehicles.

Extras: In addition to eight-player LAN support, EXTREME TACTICS will have a skirmish mode for one-player deathmatches against computer foes. The game's terrain is 3D, while the units are 2D sprites. The terrain, though, does not seem to be as tactically influential as that in DARK REIGN or TOTAL ANNIHILATION, in which the 3D terrain governs everything from line-of-sight to firing bonuses. Visit our sister Web site, Gamespot (**www.gamespot.com**), for more information and an EXTREME TACTICS designer diary.

14 Hidden Wars

Premise: A human federation and an alien empire are locked in battle in a key nebula that surrounds resource-rich planets. As a lieutenant of either side, you must battle the other, while simultaneously watching for treachery from your less-than-trustworthy superior officer.

Gameplay: HIDDEN WARS, like many other real-time games, has resource management, building, and unit creation. But it also has a few key differences, two of the most significant being its engine and perspective. The graphics are full 3D, looking more like a state-of-the-art action game than a strategy title, with 3D card support, dynamic lighting, translucencies, antialiasing, and various other special effects. With such graphic quality, it ranks in an elite group with the likes of MYTH, WARHAMMER: DARK OMEN, and POPULOUS III. The engine supports two views: a top-down view and a close-to-the-ground, third-person view. The latter still gives you full command of your units and military infrastructure, but gets you closer to the action, giving the combat a more visceral appeal.

Category: Tactical
Developer: Ronin
Publisher: Ripcord
www.ripcordgames.com
ETA: January 1998
Engine: 3D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Sci-Fi
Multiplayer Max: 4



HIDDEN WARS also emphasizes information warfare. The interface will provide for numerous satellite feeds, allowing gamers to access many locations and troop deployments quickly. The fact that these views are so important to gameplay means that gamers will have to be constantly alert to win.

Extras: HIDDEN WARS will have multiplayer support, including four-player Internet and LAN play. The missions structure contains detailed briefings and debriefings, as in TIE FIGHTER and MECHWARRIOR 2. The missions also help to advance a storyline in which the human player learns to distrust the human commander and join forces with the supposedly insurgent rebels against the aliens, while the alien player, an unwitting mind slave of the alien leader, can possibly earn freedom from his oppressor.

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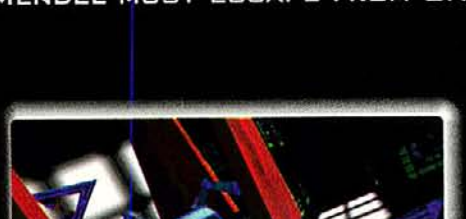
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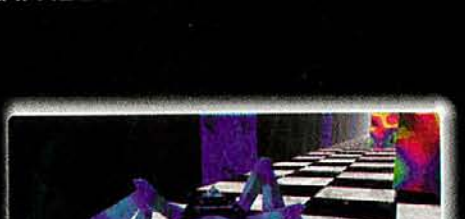
BUT MENDEL IS HARMLESS AND ALONE. HE'S TRAPPED IN A LABORATORY AWAITING TORTUROUS EXPERIMENTS DESIGNED TO TEST THE SCOPE OF THIS NEW TECHNOLOGY. YOU CAN HELP HIM, BUT YOU CAN'T CONTROL HIM. IF MENDEL DOESN'T ESCAPE, GALAPAGOS WILL PROSPER, AND ITS TYRANNICAL ARMY WILL RAVAGE THE GALAXY.

MENDEL MUST ESCAPE FROM GALAPAGOS!

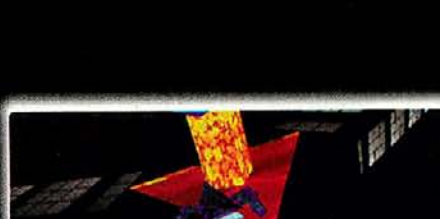




GALAPAGOS
Tyrannous Command Center

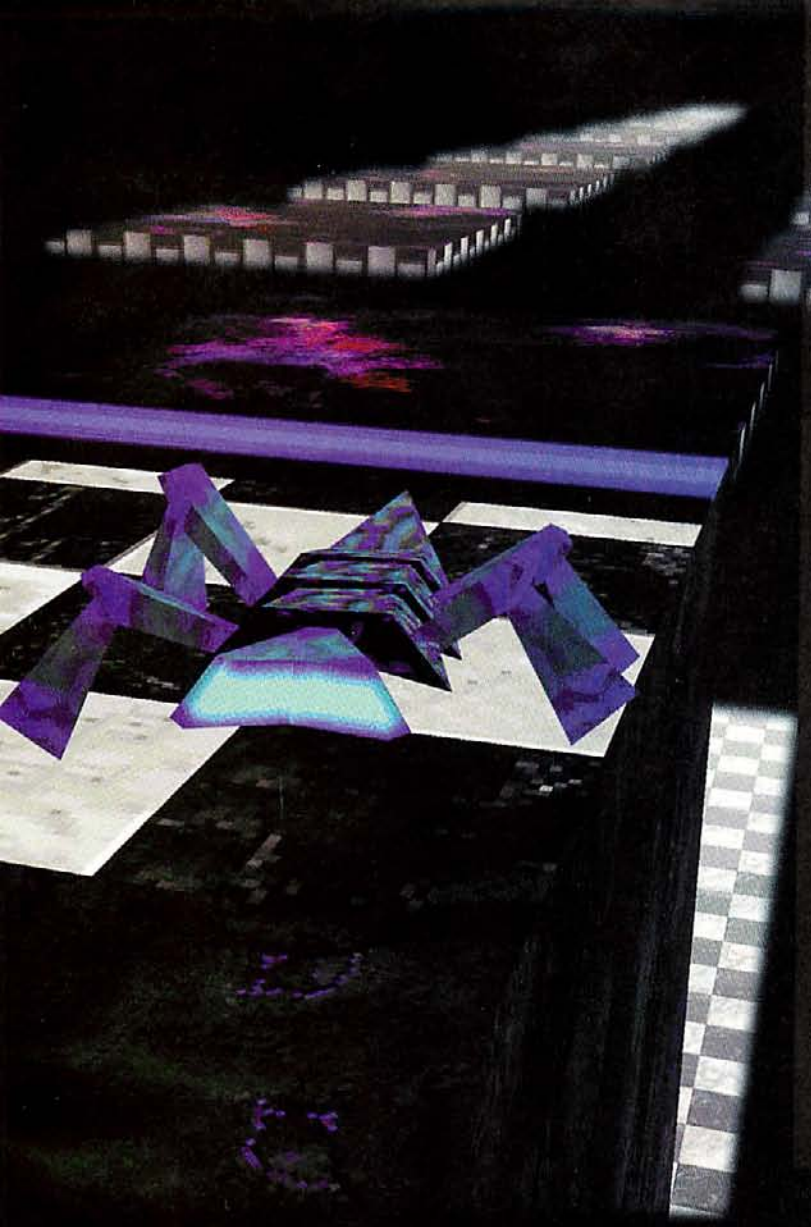


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LUMEN
Subterranean Powerplant

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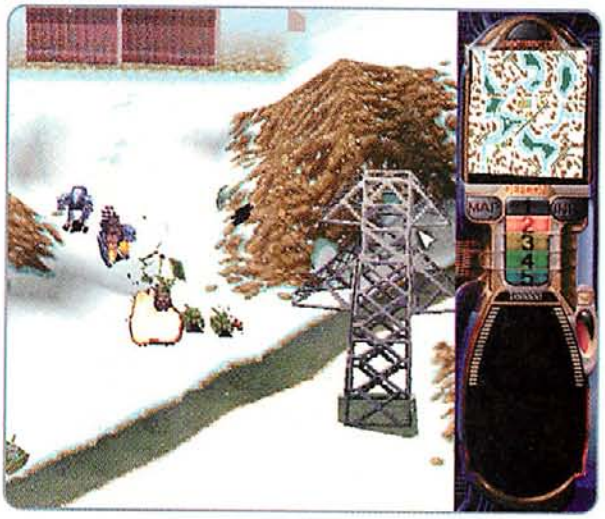
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15 WarGames



Category: Tactical
Developer: Interactive Studios
Publisher: MGM Interactive
www.mgm.com
ETA: January 1998
Engine: 3D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Modern day
Multiplayer Max: 4

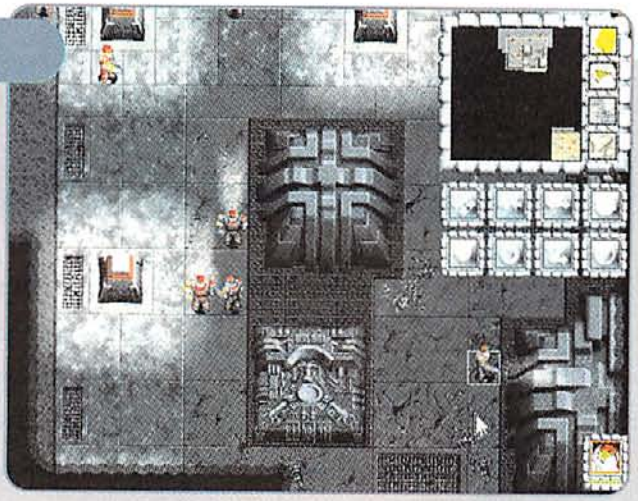
Premise: WarGames is based on the movie of the same name, which starred Matthew Broderick as a computer hacker. This time, you fight the WOPR in virtual battles across digital battlefields. As the game progresses, though, the WOPR starts to lose control and the combat moves from virtual reality to real life.

Gameplay: WarGames is one of the real-time games in this roundup that uses a 3D engine. This allows for zooming, more realistic graphics, and a camera that can be completely rotated. Units and buildings will also be 3D; when you destroy objects, they'll burst into separate pieces and scorch the ground. You'll be able to destroy buildings and trees and deform the landscape. There will be a variety of terrain to fight on, including snow, desert, and islands. On snow levels, units will slide on the ice, while on desert terrain, they'll move a little more slowly.

Resource management will differ slightly in this game. Instead of harvesting resources, you'll send hackers into computer centers to secure equipment and money. If you hack your own centers, you get small upgrades to weaponry and units. If you hack neutral centers, you'll get more upgrades, money, and information. Hacking the enemy sites will allow you to steal their money and gain access to even better units. By hacking enemy centers, you can also install a temporary virus in the enemy's units that will cause them to go berserk. Needless to say, hackers play a vital role in the game, and the more remote or dangerous the hacked site, the greater the rewards.

Extras: WarGames will have support for LAN, modem, and serial play, as well as Mpath support. Multiplayer games will also feature traditional deathmatch, capture the flag, and cooperative multiplayer missions.

16 Adhara 3



Category: Tactical
Developer: Pixel Painters
Publisher: TBD
www.pixelpainters.com
ETA: Christmas 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: No
Building: No
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 8

Premise: In the future, mankind's first contact with aliens is his deadliest, when humans colonize the planet Adhara 3 in 2274. The aliens living there, the Lux, slaughter the human colonies, leaving only a few survivors. As the leader of the surviving humans, you must battle the aliens and retake Adhara 3.

Gameplay: Adhara 3 is a real-time game striving for increased realism. There is no resource management or unit creation. Instead, you start with a handful of survivors and must use them as engineers or soldiers. In order to grow, you must find captured humans and free them, thus increasing your army's size. To gain additional technology and weaponry, you have to capture abandoned buildings or those already held by the Lux. If you don't have appropriate buildings for your scenario, you can convert them to more useful structures with the help of engineers. The only things you can build are makeshift walls, bridges, and other simple structures. This type of gameplay adds realism and fosters the feeling that missions are real-life surgical strikes to infiltrate enemy camps or reclaim lost settlements.

The game will have both day and night missions. In fact, because the plantlike aliens are strongest during daylight, many missions will have to be conducted during the dead of night. In all scenarios, the sun will rise and set, so during a given mission, you might wait until nighttime before moving into enemy camps.

Extras: Adhara 3 will have an extensive plot fleshed out by animated cut-scenes. The art is unique among the games in our roundup in that it has heavy *anime* influences, both in the movies and the actual gameplay. There will be multiplayer support for LAN, modem, and serial connections, as well as skirmish mode against computer players.



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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #190

17 War Wind II

Premise: The Obblinox and Tha'roon have joined forces, as have the Shama'Li and Eaggra, while two groups of humans (scientists and marines) suddenly enter the world of Yavaun. As any of these four factions, you must battle for your survival and the subjugation of all others.

Gameplay: The complex gameplay of War Wind returns, but with a more streamlined system of introducing you to the game's depth. There will now be a tutorial involving the marines' side.

The gameplay will have the same detail and depth of the original. Now, however, instead of recruiting units through your Inn, you will have to increase the size of your army by finding settlements around the map. If you find a settlement of your race, you can recruit new units. The inhabitants will join gradually of their own accord, but you can also enlist them quickly by persuading them with your leader. If you find a settlement of the enemy's race, you can destroy it and deprive him of his most vital resource. The resource model is basically the same as in the original.

Category: Tactical
Developer: Dreamforge
Publisher: SSI
www.ssionline.com
ETA: November 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 4

Extras: War Wind II will include more vehicles, as well as the regular ground units. There will also be more air units, and each race will still have its mega-unit. In addition, certain races will have units that can burrow, swim, and cloak themselves (like the stealthy Tha'roon from War Wind). SSI hopes to streamline the upgrading and spell-casting. War Wind II will include multiplayer support for head-to head play and up to four gamers over LAN.



18 Dark Colony

Premise: Earth has invaded Mars, and now the organic Martian army and mechanized human forces are engaged in a bloody war, with the red planet as the prize.

Gameplay: Dark Colony's gameplay will be very familiar to real-time wargamers, as it is similar to C&C and WarCraft. However, the game does have most of the enhancements of real-time's third generation, including the ability to queue multiple units for production and set waypoints for moving troops. Dark Colony has an impressive graphics engine, with nice special effects, such as translucency and day and night cycles.

Like War Wind II, Dark Colony will let you carry over a few unit commanders from scenario to scenario. While it is a decent game, it isn't ground-breaking or addictively fun like some of the other games in this roundup. It suffers from a lack of information in the gameplay screen, inadequate resource supplies, and is also one of the bloodiest games covered here, with exploding alien heads, rivers of blood, and even maggot-infested carcasses in the cut-scenes.

Category: Tactical
Developer: GameTek
Publisher: SSI
www.ssionline.com
ETA: September 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 8

Extras: Dark Colony has multiplayer support for up to eight gamers over LAN, or head-to-head play with serial or modem connections. In multiplayer games, Dark Colony has power-ups and one-shot artifacts strewn about the map for the taking. See our reviews section this month for a full review.



19 CyberStorm 2: CorpWars

Premise: You play in the Earthsiege universe as a powerful space corporation, buying Hercs and breeding pilots to conquer planets for riches and to defeat the scourge of the Cybrids.

Gameplay: Whereas the original was a turn-based game, CyberStorm 2 has moved to real-time. Sierra assures us, though, that the realistic features of the old combat engine, such as facing and line of sight, will make the transition to this engine. So will the terrain, which will affect movement and attack.

In CyberStorm 2, you will have to control both the production of your Hercs and the growth of your Bioderms, the Herc pilots. You'll begin the game with only enough cash to purchase a low level of Herc technology and hulls, but as you complete more missions, you'll earn money to buy better technology, better hulls, and better weapons to create more lethal Hercs. To pilot these monstrosities, you'll breed Bioderms. Of course, the more money you have, the better the quality of your bioengineered henchmen. Each Bioderm will have several different abilities, from sharpshooting to battle hardiness, which you can upgrade as you gain more spending cash.

Extras: CyberStorm 2 will have support for eight-player LAN play. Battles will be small, squad-level affairs, as you command a handful of Hercs. Combat will thus be more specific in scope, with escort, rescue, ambush, and base attack missions; rather than being huge build-and-attack massacres.

Category: Tactical
Developer/Publisher: Sierra
www.sierra.com
ETA: Early 1998
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: No
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 8



20 Army Men



Premise: You'll swear that Sgt. Rock and Sgt. Fury have come to life as you command the plastic army men of your misspent youth in a clever, fresh-looking approach to real-time strategy. Movietone-style news footage, which covers your progress in an imaginary WWII-style campaign, further enhances the game's ambience.

Gameplay: In Army Men, you command small squads of six different unit types in 48 different missions. Some require you to rescue POWs in order to succeed. Others will necessitate the demolition of radar installations or tunneling under enemy bases. Mission designs offer wide variety.

Category: Tactical
Developer/Publisher: 3DO
www.3do.com
ETA: March 1998
Engine: 3D
Resource Management: No
Building: No
Setting: Modern day
Multiplayer Max: 4

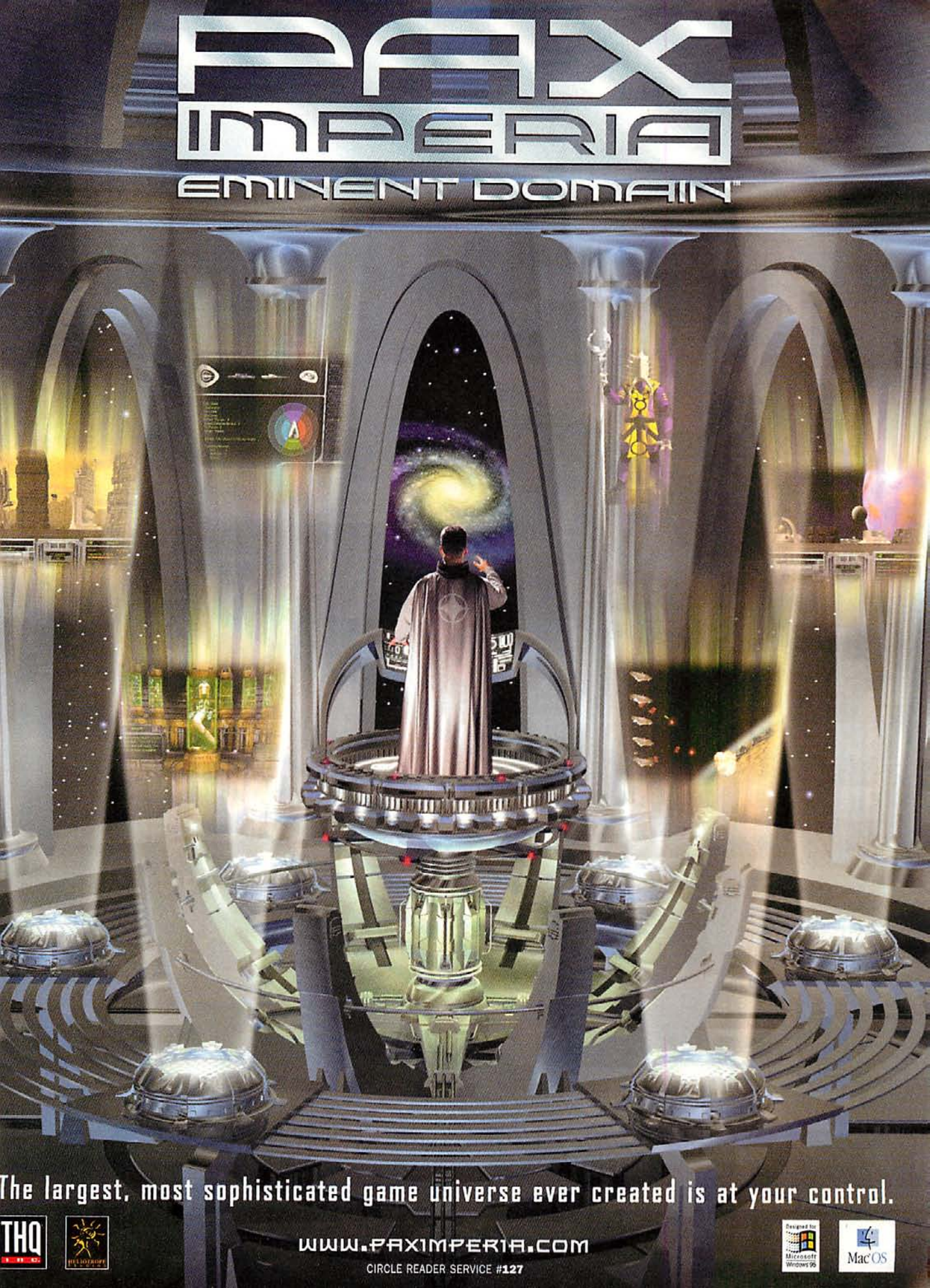
You simply choose your units, deploy them carefully, command them to move and fire, and finally, respond with command ingenuity to the radio transmissions you receive from your superior officers.

The big difference between Army Men and other real-time strategy games is that you are the larger-than-life sergeant on the battlefield, not the commander in the skies. It is this "in the heart of the action" feel that brings the battles up close and personal.

While we haven't gotten to play the final AI as of press time, it appears that the subordinate AI will avoid the careless mistakes we've seen before, such as units that walk single file into ambush areas and soldiers who are oblivious to known enemy locations. In demo games, we've even seen soldiers wait until they attained critical mass before attacking and, sometimes, use combined arms to maximize success.

Extras: The game will support four-player LAN and head-to-head modem play. Multiplayer play will use eight different custom maps, each of which will be designed expressly for standard, elimination, and deathmatch competition. The game will also ship with a very robust 3D terrain editor.

—Johnny Wilson


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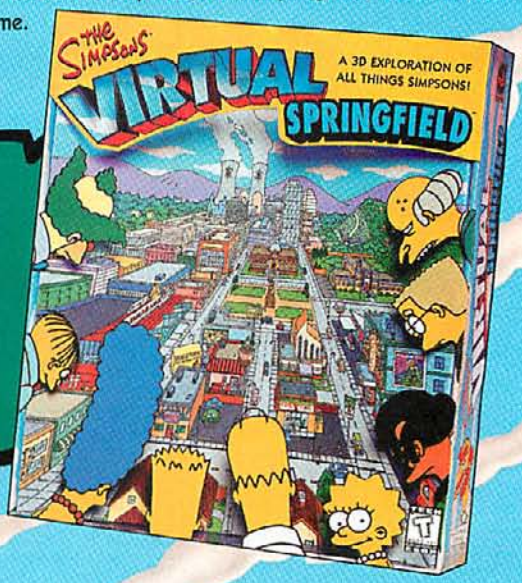
Game	Developer	Publisher	Web Site	Info. Number
7th Legion	Epic Megagames	MicroProse	www.microprose.com	(800) 695-GAME
Adhara3	Pixel Painters	TBD	www.pixelpainters.com	n/a
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Conquest Earth	Data Design	Eidos	www.eidos.com	n/a
Constructor	System 3	Acclaim	www.acclaimnation.com	(516) 656-2650
CyberStorm 2	Sierra	Sierra	www.sierra.com	(800) 757-7707
Dark Colony	Gametek	SSI	www.ssionline.com	(800) 234-3088
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WarBreeds	Red Orb	Red Orb	www.redorb.com	(800) 548-1798
WarGames	Interactive Studios	MGM Interactive	www.mgm.com	n/a
WarSport	Timesink	Timesink	www.warsport.com	n/a
Waterworld	Intelligent Games	Interplay	www.interplay.com	(800) INTERPL

Release Date	Engine	Resource Management	Building	Setting	Multiplayer	No. of Players
October 1997	2D	No	Yes	Sci-fi	modem, LAN, Internet	4
Late 1997	2D	No	No	Sci-fi	modem, LAN	8
October 1997	2D	Yes	Yes	Historical	modem, LAN, Internet	8
March 1998	3D	No	No	Modern Day	modem, LAN, Internet	4
October 1997	2D	Yes	Yes	Modern Day	none	n/a
September 1997	3D	No	No	Historical	modem, LAN, Internet	2
October 1997	2D	Yes	Yes	Sci-fi	modem, LAN, Internet	8
September 1997	2D	Yes	Yes	Modern Day	modem, LAN	4
First Quarter 1998	2D	No	No	Sci-fi	modem, LAN, Internet	8
September 1997	2D	Yes	Yes	Sci-fi	modem, LAN	8
September 1997	2D	Yes	Yes	Sci-fi	modem, LAN, Internet	8
Late 1997	2D	Yes	Yes	Sci-fi	modem, LAN	8
October 1997	2D	Yes	Yes	Sci-fi	modem, LAN	6
October 1997	2D	Yes	Yes	Modern Day	modem, LAN, Internet	8
October 1997	2D	Yes	Yes	Prehistorical	modem, LAN	6
November 1997	2D/3D	Yes	Yes	Sci-fi	modem, LAN, Internet	4
January 1998	3D	Yes	Yes	Sci-fi	modem, LAN, Internet	4
October 1997	2D	Yes	Yes	Sci-fi	modem, LAN	6
Fall 1997	2D	Yes	Yes	Sci-fi	modem, LAN, Internet	8
Fall 1997	3D	Yes	Yes	Fantasy	modem, LAN, Internet	8
Spring 1998	3D	Yes	No	Sci-fi	modem, LAN, Internet	6
Late 1997	3D	No	No	Fantasy	modem, LAN, Internet	16
Late 1997	2D	Yes	Yes	Fantasy	modem, LAN, Internet	8
Out	2D	Yes	Yes	Sci-fi	modem, LAN, Internet	6
October 1997	2D	Yes	Yes	Sci-fi	modem, LAN, Internet	16
Early 1998	3D	Yes	Yes	Fantasy	modem, LAN	4
Late 1997	2D/3D	Yes	Yes	Sci-fi	modem, LAN, Internet	2
Late 1997	2D	Yes	Yes	Historical	modem, LAN, Internet	6
Fall 1997	3D	No	No	Historical	modem, LAN, Internet	8
Early 1998	3D	Yes	Yes	Modern Day	none	n/a
November 1997	2D	Yes	Yes	Sci-fi	modem, LAN, Internet	8
October 1997	2D	Yes	Yes	Fantasy	LAN, Internet	4
October 1997	3D	Yes	Yes	Sci-fi	modem, LAN, Internet	10
January 1998	3D	No	No	Fantasy	modem, LAN	2
Fall 1997	2D	Yes	Yes	Sci-fi	modem, LAN	6
November 1997	2D	Yes	Yes	Sci-fi	modem, LAN	4
First Quarter 1998	2D	Yes	Yes	Sci-fi	modem, LAN, Internet	8
Early 1998	3D	Yes	Yes	Sci-fi	modem, LAN	4
December 1997	2D	No	No	Sci-fi	Mplayer only	8
September 1997	2D	No	No	Sci-fi	none	n/a

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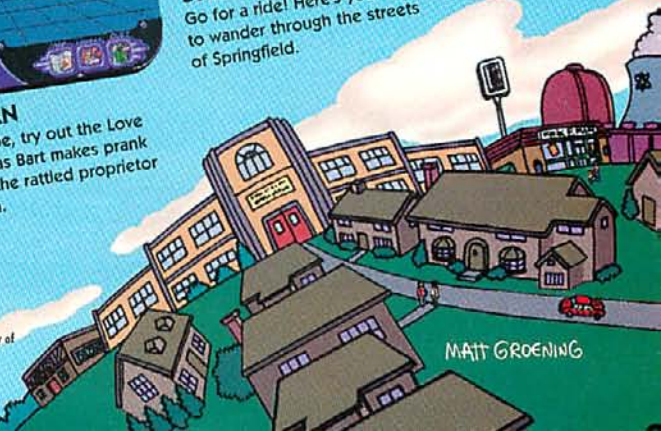
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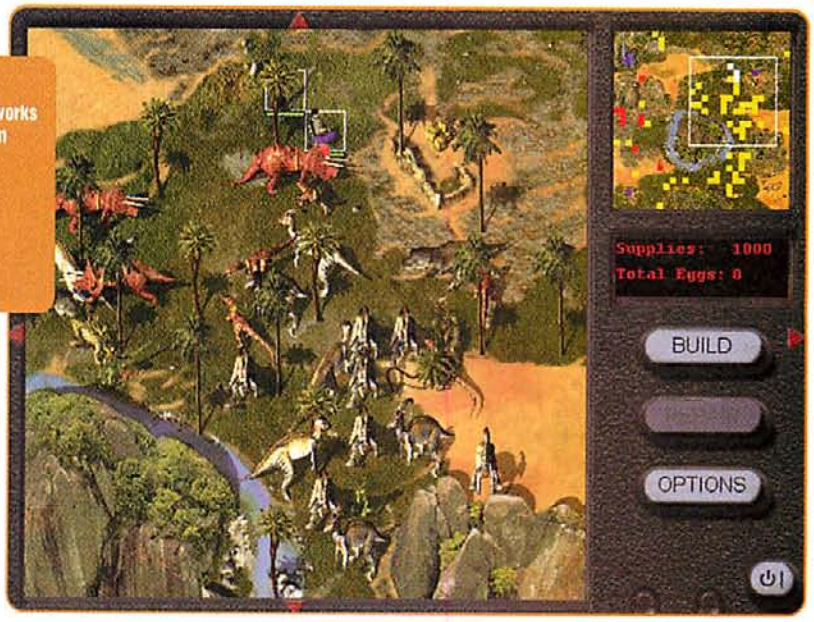
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www.foxinteractive.com

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #060

21 Chaos Island



Category: Tactical
Developer/Publisher: Dreamworks
www.dreamworksgames.com
ETA: October 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Modern day
Multiplayer Max: None

Premise: You return to the Lost World to control the cast of the movie and direct a team of scientists to battle with evil hunters and rogue dinosaurs.

Gameplay: This game is a real-time strategy game designed for kids and teens, but it bears mentioning because it is a real-time strategy game with dinosaurs.

In CHAOS ISLAND, you won't recruit troops or units. Instead, you will order around the cast from *Lost World*, including Ian Malcolm and Sara Harding. However, you will also get to command dinosaurs against the InGen hunters and other rogue dinosaurs. At the same time, you'll need to build camps and research new technologies, such as tranquilizer guns, faster boots, and incubation technology for speedier egg-hatching.

You acquire dinosaurs by finding their nests and stealing eggs, which you then hatch at your camp. Eight types of dinosaurs will be available for command, including T. rex, Raptors, Stegosaurs, and Triceratopses. Aside from eggs, the other resource you manage are supplies, which you'll find in old InGen ruins about the island and in air-dropped shipments. But the hunters will also see the air-dropped supplies, so you'll compete with them for the precious cargo.

Extras: The game does not have a multiplayer component, but it does have a storyline fleshed out with cut-scenes, and the actors from the film all lend their voices to their characters.

22 WarSport

Premise: In the future, WarSport has replaced football as the most popular form of violent recreation. As the coach of a team, you command a 50-man squad of robots against your rivals, attempting to destroy their headquarters and win each game.

Gameplay: WARSPORT has the most structure of any game in our roundup because it's supposed to be a futuristic sports game. The gameplay is, of course, complete strategy, with units to command and enemy headquarters to storm and take. You play in an octagonal arena against seven opponents, each with a starting force of various robots and a Comcen (headquarters) in its home-zone. The goal is to amass the most points during a game (consisting of two, 10-minute halves). Points are awarded for destroying enemy Comcens, taking over enemy Comcens and bringing them to your goal line, or conquering other players' homezones.

Category: Tactical
Developer/Publisher: Timesink
www.mplayer.com
ETA: December 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: No
Building: No
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 8

During play, you'll command your troops in C&C style, attempting to gain points through brutal combat, but you'll also get to issue commands from your Comcen, and fire off missiles and countermissiles at the enemy.

Extras: WARSPORT is an online-only game, available exclusively on Mplayer. Up to eight gamers can play in one arena. At present, and probably in the final version, the game is free. In fact, you can log onto Mplayer's site at **www.mplayer.com**, download the beta of the game, and start playing now.



23 War Inc.



Premise: In the 21st century, corporations have replaced countries as the military powerhouses of the world. Acting under contract from country leaders, they now enforce world peace or engage in acts of global terrorism. As the CEO of one such corporation, you are charged with turning your company into the world's strongest.

Category: Tactical
Developer: Optik Software
Publisher: Interactive Magic
www.imagicgames.com
ETA: Late 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 6

Gameplay: The gameplay in WAR INC. all revolves around the corporate theme. There is a strategic portion that wraps around the tactical combat. In this part of the game, you get to play the stock market and earn more cash, which you can then use to purchase units or research new weaponry. You research new units and weapons components, which you then combine to create a large number of unit variations.

You can also collect money by taking on mercenary contracts. The goal is always to get more cash to increase the power and technology of your company. If you ever go in the red, the company's board will vote you out of office, and you'll lose the game.

For less cerebral gamers, this strategy portion is completely optional. If you choose, you can have the computer automate this process, while you simply build unit variations and hop into tactical battle, commanding your forces against the enemy.

Extras: WAR INC. will offer head-to-head modem and six-player LAN support. The game will also provide a map editor for creating your own scenarios.

24 Dominion

Category: Tactical
Developer: Todd Porter/Ion Storm
Publisher: Eidos
www.7thlevel.com
ETA: Late 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 8

Premise: Four races—Scorp, Human, Darken, and Merc—are locked in combat in the far future. While the rest of the universe lies devastated, these four groups have come to the planet Phygos to settle their war.

Gameplay: DOMINION has gameplay similar to games such as COMMAND & CONQUER. Its main pluses are the sheer number of units, the four different sides, and a collection of cool, little features and unit abilities.

The game's strong point is the four races. Each has its own abilities, strengths, and weaknesses. The humans have the swiftest and most advanced units, but they cost more and take longer to build. The Mercs are aggressive, with advanced weaponry and good all-round units. The Darken have powerful armored vehicles, but are slow in movement. The Scorp have a hive mentality and weaker units, though they can surprise opponents by burrowing below ground to ambush enemies.

Some of the cool features in the game are telepad units for teleporting across the map, a tremendous variety of mechanized units and vehicles, and commanders to whom you can delegate simple commands. Gameplay takes place in more than 40 missions spread over four campaigns.



Extras: DOMINION will have multiplayer support for eight-gamer battles over LAN, as well as modem and serial-cable support.

25 LEDWars

Premise: It is the near future on a planet dominated by multinational corporations that employ private armies to cultivate money-making empires. As the commander of one CEO's army, you are charged with finding resources to maintain the life-giving LED drug trade.

Gameplay: LEDWARS is a real-time strategy game in the mold of C&C and WARCRAFT. You go out and harvest resources (in this game, you drill for oil and plant seeds in fertile patches to harvest), then build units and buildings. The units in this game, as in TOTAL ANNIHILATION and others, comprise a healthy mix of air, land, and naval units. The game has a corporate theme, not unlike that of WAR INC., but is not as refined. You do work for a corporation, so you'll receive contracts (via video mail) that you can undertake to increase your company's assets.



Category: Tactical
Developer: Larian Studios
Publisher: Ionos
www.ionos.com
ETA: September 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 8

In multiplayer games, you have the option of playing in a "World War" mode, in which all gamers start with overflowing resources.

Extras: LEDWARS will include a scenario editor for creating your own maps. It will also support LAN, Internet, modem, and serial play.

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26 Earth 2140



Premise: In the far future, the civilized countries of the West have united against the imperialist Eurasian Dynasty, resulting in an Earth-shattering war that has already obliterated Africa and Australia. As either the United Civilized States or the Eurasian Dynasty, you must wipe out the other global power and bring order to the chaotic world.

Gameplay: EARTH 2140 is Interplay's preeminent real-time entrant this year, as MAX 2 is being upgraded for an early 1998 release. The gameplay is very similar to C&C, with a few added aspects. There will be some special features, such as units that can teleport across the map using particular structures, and computer commanders to whom you can give control of squads. The squads will then either aggressively search for and attack enemy troops or defend your base.

The United Civilized States will have more conventional weaponry, such as tanks and planes, while the Eurasian Dynasty will have exotic units, such as androids and robots.

Category: Tactical
Developer: Top Ware
Publisher: Interplay
www.interplay.com
ETA: Late 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 6

Extras: EARTH 2140 will have multiplayer support for deathmatches over LAN, modem, and serial connection. During multiplayer games, you'll be able to construct a limitless number of units (in contrast, WARCRAFT II had a cap to how many units could be on the screen, which prevented truly huge armies from coming into play).

27 KKND Xtreme

Premise: Two factions of humans have managed to survive a devastating nuclear war. One privileged group fled to underground shelters, preserved their lifestyle, and became known as the Survivors. The other group—the few above-ground survivors of the armageddon—became the Evolved. Now, as the Survivors emerge to reclaim the surface, the two sides clash for the right to inherit this wretched Earth.

Category: Tactical
Developer: Melbourne House
Publisher: Electronic Arts
www.ea.com
ETA: October 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 6

Gameplay: KKND XTREME is actually the "Special Edition" of the original KKND, released earlier this year. As reviewed, KKND rated 2.5 stars and was a competent, if uninspired C&C clone.

KKND XTREME is an upgrade of that game, with 20 new, tougher missions, as well as a skirmish mode for multiplayer deathmatch with computer-controlled opponents. The graphics have been touched up, and the network code is now more stable. Apart from these enhancements, KKND XTREME remains a clone, with a simple real-time model.



Extras: KKND XTREME has support for six-gamer network play and head-to-head modem play. It comes bundled with a strategy guide, due to the added, more difficult missions.

28 Waterworld



Premise: Following the plot of the movie, you must find dry land while fighting against evil human factions in a postapocalyptic, nearly submerged world.

Gameplay: Coming two years after the release of the terrible movie on which it's based, WATERWORLD needs something to distinguish it from both the film and other real-time strategy games.

The gameplay is much more squad-based, as you control individual units with names and inventories. The scenarios are more mission-oriented (saving hostages, for example), rather than grand battles with armies of units. In most cases, you pick or buy your weapons and items, outfit a small group of units, and then maneuver them through a level to accomplish their task while causing major damage. There is no building, but you do pick up resources ranging from personal items, such as weapons and medikits, to more vital resources, such as water and metal. With these, you buy equipment between missions. You can equip individual units with weapons, up to three items, and armor.

Maps seem fairly small and are built around functional areas (bases and platforms), rather than large terrain.

Category: Tactical
Developer: Intelligent Games
Publisher: Interplay
www.interplay.com
ETA: Fall 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: No
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: None

Extras: The story gets fleshed out by cut-scenes as you complete more missions. That could be a plus or a minus, depending on how you look at it, but the game offers both never-before-seen clips from *Waterworld* and shots of some of the actors from the film.

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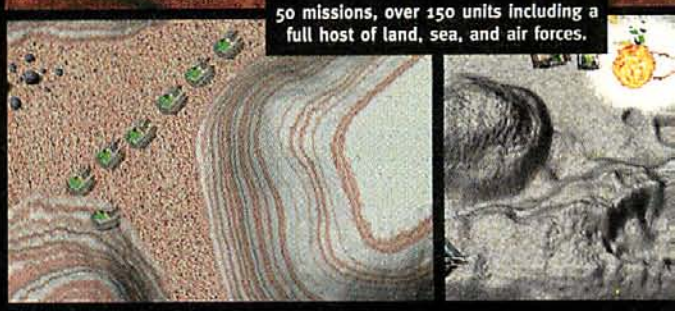
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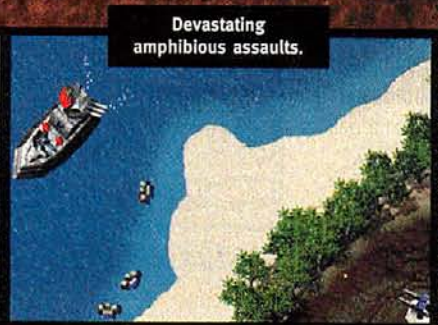
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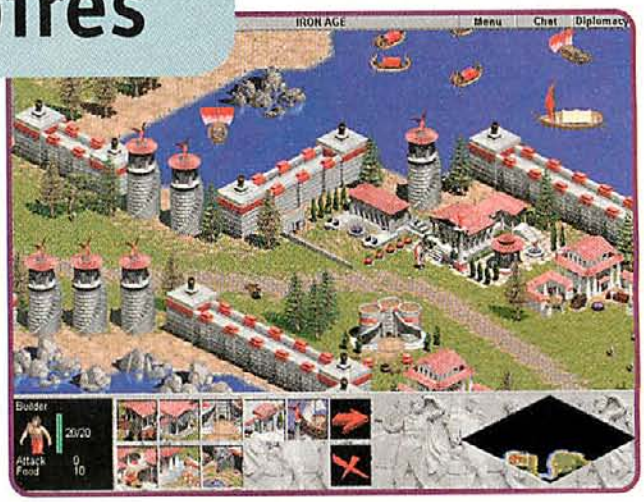


CIRCLE READER SERVICE #368

Strategic Real-Time Games

Strategic real-time games actually resemble turn-based games such as CIVILIZATION and MASTER OF ORION in that they involve more strategic thinking and the competition extends beyond the arena of combat. Aside from X-COM APOCALYPSE, few games that are currently available fall into this category. Generally, these games have a discrete strategic engine for the majority of gameplay, in which you manage resources, research knowledge, build up your empire, and engage in diplomacy and espionage. Combat is only a facet of the game, and it is typically resolved in a separate tactical module. In some cases—AGE OF EMPIRES is a good example—both fighting and empire-building take place in the same engine, but in these games, there is still much to do beyond fighting.

1 Age of Empires



Premise: You are one of twelve ancient civilizations, ranging from the Persians to the ancient Greeks. Though you start as only a small village, with just a few tribesmen, you must hunt and gather food, advance to more a sophisticated age, learn self-sufficiency and technology, and then make the full leap to civilization. Competing against you are other cultures with whom you can fight, trade, or negotiate as you all try to progress from the Stone Age to the Iron Age.

Gameplay: Apparently, Microsoft has finally learned something about games. AGE OF EMPIRES, its second strategy title, is not just a good Microsoft game, but a damn good game in general. It's a unique, intriguing example of the real-time genre, one that adds the depth and complexity of a CIV-caliber game to the intuitive, intense, and multiplayer-friendly feel of real-time games. The two games that seem to have inspired AGE most are CIVILIZATION (which AGE cocreator Bruce Shelly designed with Sid Meier) and WARCRAFT II, whose interface, simplicity of execution, and multiplayer support AGE seems to emulate. It's not often that a game can be described as a mix of two of the greatest strategy games ever designed, but then it's not often you see a game this good.

AGE is much like other real-time games in the beginning: You start with your town center and from there build houses to support a growing population, train more villagers, gather resources, and build requisite structures for military troops. However, AGE then adds the dynamic of "evolution"; once you finish building all you can at your current level of technology, you can advance to the next age of discovery, acquiring the ability to learn a new set of buildings, troops, and nonmilitary advances. You can bet that your rivals will be advancing, so you will have to do likewise if you want to survive and thrive.

AGE OF EMPIRES has four ages through which you can advance: Stone, Tool, Bronze, and Iron, in that order. You can advance to the next age by demonstrating your proficiency with your current

Category: Strategic
Developer: Ensemble Studios
Publisher: Microsoft
www.microsoft.com
ETA: October 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Historical
Multiplayer Max: 8

Victory By Any Means

AGE OF EMPIRES offers much more gameplay beyond combat, so it stands to reason that there are more ways to win than simple conquest. True, most games will boil down to combat, but victory can be supplemented by economic and scientific achievement.

There will be four campaigns in the game, each with varying difficulty, stories, and goals. In multiplayer, gamers can win purely on points (which are computed by adding totals from four categories: military, economy, technology, and religion). You can also win by being the first civilization to build a wonder. Each cultural region has one wonder available to build. It's a massive undertaking, but victory goes to whoever builds and sustains it for 2000 years (400 seconds). You can also win through religious means, by finding all the world's artifacts (there are a limited number of carts strewn about the map) or by claiming all the world's religious ruins (a small number of Stonehenge-like ruins that go to whichever civilization last touched them).

by building structures native to the era. When you advance, more buildings and troop types become available (think of it as upgrading your WarCraft II castle to a keep and then a fortress, but on a much larger scale).

However, when you advance to a new age, you gain more than just new buildings and troops. You acquire additional trappings of civilization. In the Tool Age, you'll learn how to build farms for self-sufficient food harvesting, and develop various technologies, such as the plow for better farming and the wheel for faster unit movement. During the Iron Age, you'll be able to research writing (which expedites the sharing of map knowledge between cultures) and government. The technologies are a good mix between military and nonmilitary achievements. For example, you'll research better tools in order to make rock and gold mining more efficient, and to improve your warriors' armor from hides to leather to bronze and, finally, to steel.

In a feature that mirrors reality, the resources you need to gather change as you progress. In the Stone and Tool Ages, you need to gather only food and wood for your units and buildings. When you advance to the Bronze Age, you begin to need stone for construction. Finally, in the Iron Age, you need to accumulate gold to train units and construct buildings. You acquire food by gathering berries from bushes, by hunting wild animals, and, eventually, by farming (simple but pleasantly realistic). You chop trees to get wood and mine quarries and mineral veins to get stone and gold.



Dealing with your neighbors is a big part of Age of Empires. Most likely, you'll fight them with your troops, all the while researching more devastating troops and weapons and building up massive armies to wage war. Still, you can always trade with them to earn a little extra gold or buy their kindness through regular tributes (though we haven't tried it, so we can't say if it really deters hostilities). The tribute system also allows you to give resources to your allies in multiplayer games.

Age of Empires is a good game, and one the smartest and most sophisticated games of our real-time roundup.

Extras: Multiplayer support for Age is good, with many user-configurable fields and a variety of selectable victory conditions. As many as eight people can play over LAN or Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone. Age will also come with a scenario editor for creating your own maps, as well as with an impressive encyclopedia of historical information.

A World of Difference

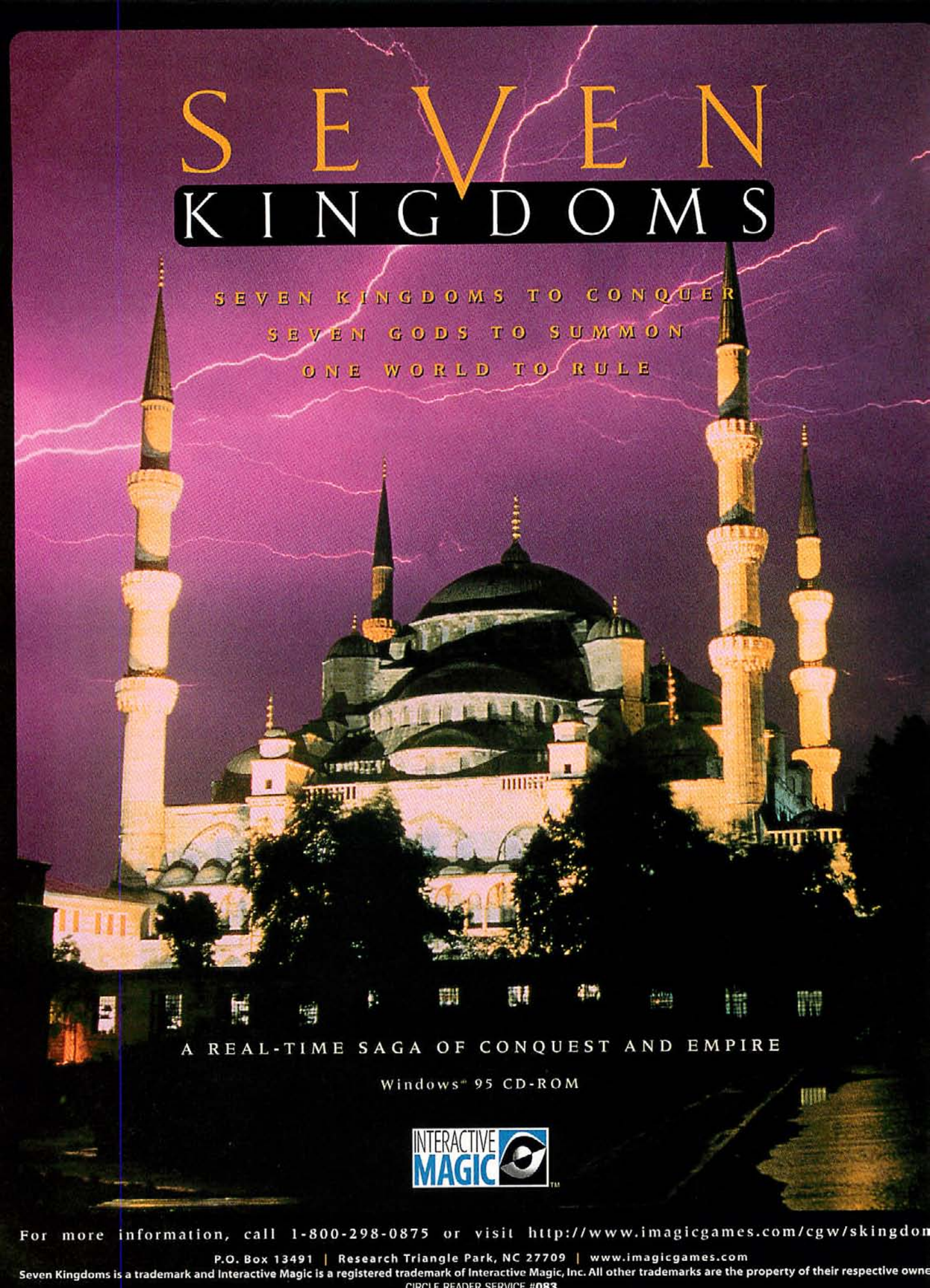
In Age of Empires you can play as one of twelve cultures. Each has its own special abilities and each has a slightly divergent set of technologies to learn. For example, while both the Shang and the Persians learn the same sciences during the early ages, the Shang later have access to more agricultural discoveries than the Persians, while the Persians learn to tame elephants for military use. The twelve civilizations are grouped in four regions—East Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa—and the cultures of a given region share a distinct style.


Middle Eastern


North African


European


East Asian


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2 Rebellion

Premise: In the aftermath of *Star Wars*, the Death Star has been destroyed, shattering the Empire's illusion of invincibility and igniting a spark of hope in the Alliance. Playing as either the Empire or the Rebellion, you attempt to crush the other side before *The Empire Strikes Back*.

Gameplay: STAR WARS REBELLION is a grand strategic game that in many respects is like a real-time MASTER OF ORION, though with a more epic storyline and a confrontational twist.

The game will begin differently, depending on who you choose to be. As the Empire, you start from a position of strength, with a large fleet and many worlds under your control. As the Rebel Alliance, you start with a smaller fleet and fewer worlds, but with a mobile base that begins play from a random location.

Category: Strategic
Developer: Coolhand
Publisher: LucasArts
www.lucasarts.com
ETA: Late 1997
Engine: 2D/3D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 2

Gameplay consists of recruiting or conquering planets to add to your cause; building facilities on planet surfaces to supply raw and refined materials and build troops, ships, and structures; sending units and characters out on missions of diplomacy to neutral planets and espionage to enemy worlds; and commanding fleets in battle against enemy armadas.

You can gain worlds either by stationing a garrison on the planet or by swaying them with a diplomatic envoy. Planets are very important in the game, because the more you have, the more facilities you can build, the more resources you can acquire, and the more troops and ships you can build.



ROUND ONE Combat will occur frequently when enemy fleets meet over a planet: You can let the computer figure the results or take direct control in a tactical battle.



"More often than not, you and your foe will end up settling disputes tactically, in the game's separate tactical engine."

Once a planet is taken, its loyalty (a statistic measured from 1-100) must be maintained, again through force or diplomacy. Battles thus can take place on the strategic level, as opposing envoys compete for a planet's loyalty.

However, more often than not, you and your foe will end up settling disputes tactically, in the game's separate tactical engine, where combat is played in a 3D cube. During combat, you directly command only your capital ships (Star Destroyers, frigates, Mon Calamari cruisers), but you can issue simple orders ("Attack selected target," for example) to your fighter complements. If you choose (and if there are simply too many battles to manage), you can have the computer resolve battles automatically.

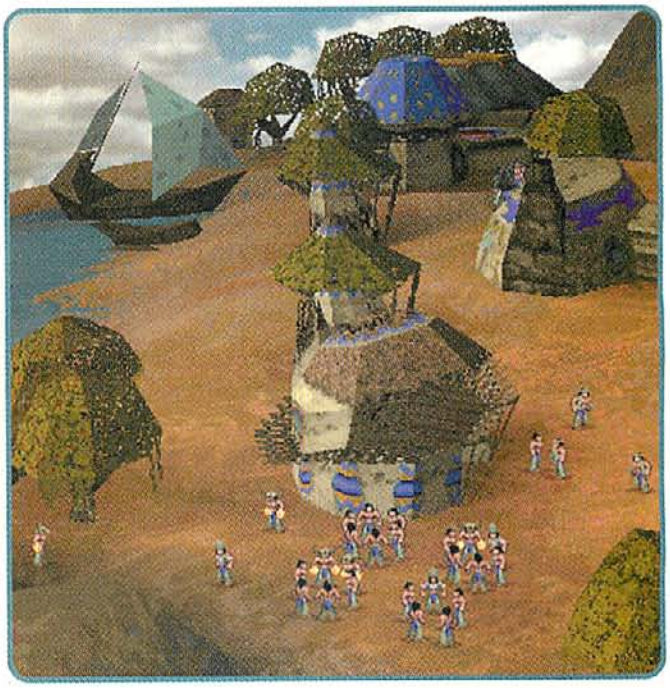
One of the most intriguing features in the game is the character aspect. Culled from the movies, books, and comics, the characters, including Darth Vadar and Luke Skywalker, are yours to command in special missions like diplomatic envoys, espionage, sabotage, kidnapping, and assassination. Certain characters also apply bonuses to combat and research.

Extras: REBELLION will have modem and LAN support, as well as Internet play over Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone for two gamers. The game will have various galaxy sizes—100, 150, or 200 planets—for short or long games. There's a unique twist in the conditions required for victory in REBELLION: Each side needs not only to take the enemy headquarters, but also to capture two vital enemy characters. Because all three conditions must be met to achieve victory, games can go back and forth as rescue missions and reclamation of HQs spread across the galaxy.



SIC 'EM Missions are a vital part of REBELLION, and can be conducted by the many unique characters in the game, such as Wedge and Han Solo.

3 Populous: The Third Coming



Premise: As the god of your world, you must order your Shaman around various realms, converting wild men to your faith by whatever means necessary.

Gameplay: POPULOUS, one of the original god-sims, put you in the role of an omnipotent ruler able to shape a world and its people at whim. POPULOUS: THE THIRD COMING, known as POPULOUS III, is the latest chapter in this series, and it's a great leap forward in many respects.

You can play the game from a world view, dispensing cruel justice to reshape the planet. But you can also actively direct the efforts of your worshippers from a third-person view.

The engine is fantastic 3D, with a curved horizon to simulate the rolling of a world under your feet. Also, you are actually represented onscreen by the Shaman.

Category: Strategic
Developer: Bullfrog
Publisher: Electronic Arts
www.ea.com
ETA: Early 1998
Engine: 3D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Fantasy
Multiplayer Max: 4

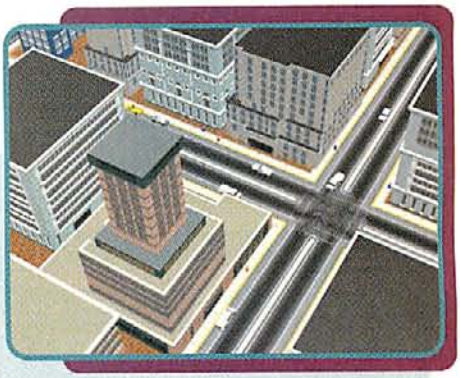
You start on a floating island; portals to different worlds open as you convert more realms. In each world, you use your Shaman's chants to convert wild men to your cause and then command them to erect buildings in homage to you. You also direct them to serve a variety of other functions, including using them as warriors. You can convert the tribesmen of rival Shamans through your own chanting or you can kill them (via magic or men) and then recruit their malleable spirits when they return to earth as free souls.

You'll be able to cast a variety of awesome spells in POPULOUS III, to an even greater environmental effect than in MYTH (or any non-strategy game for that matter), causing huge volcanoes to rise out of wide plains, for example, or forming gaping craters where mountains once stood.

Extras: POPULOUS III will have multiplayer support as well as 3D card support for some of the most sumptuous graphics of any game in our roundup. As a descendant of a classic, POPULOUS III's gameplay predates the current real-time craze and provides a different and original take on real-time gaming.

"You'll be able to cast awesome spells in POPULOUS III, causing huge **volcanoes** to rise out of wide plains."

4 SimCity 3000



Premise: This is a god-sim on an urban scale. If SIMCITY and SIMCITY 2000 weren't enough of a challenge for you, SIMCITY 3000 is sure to bring out the sophisticated urban planner within you.

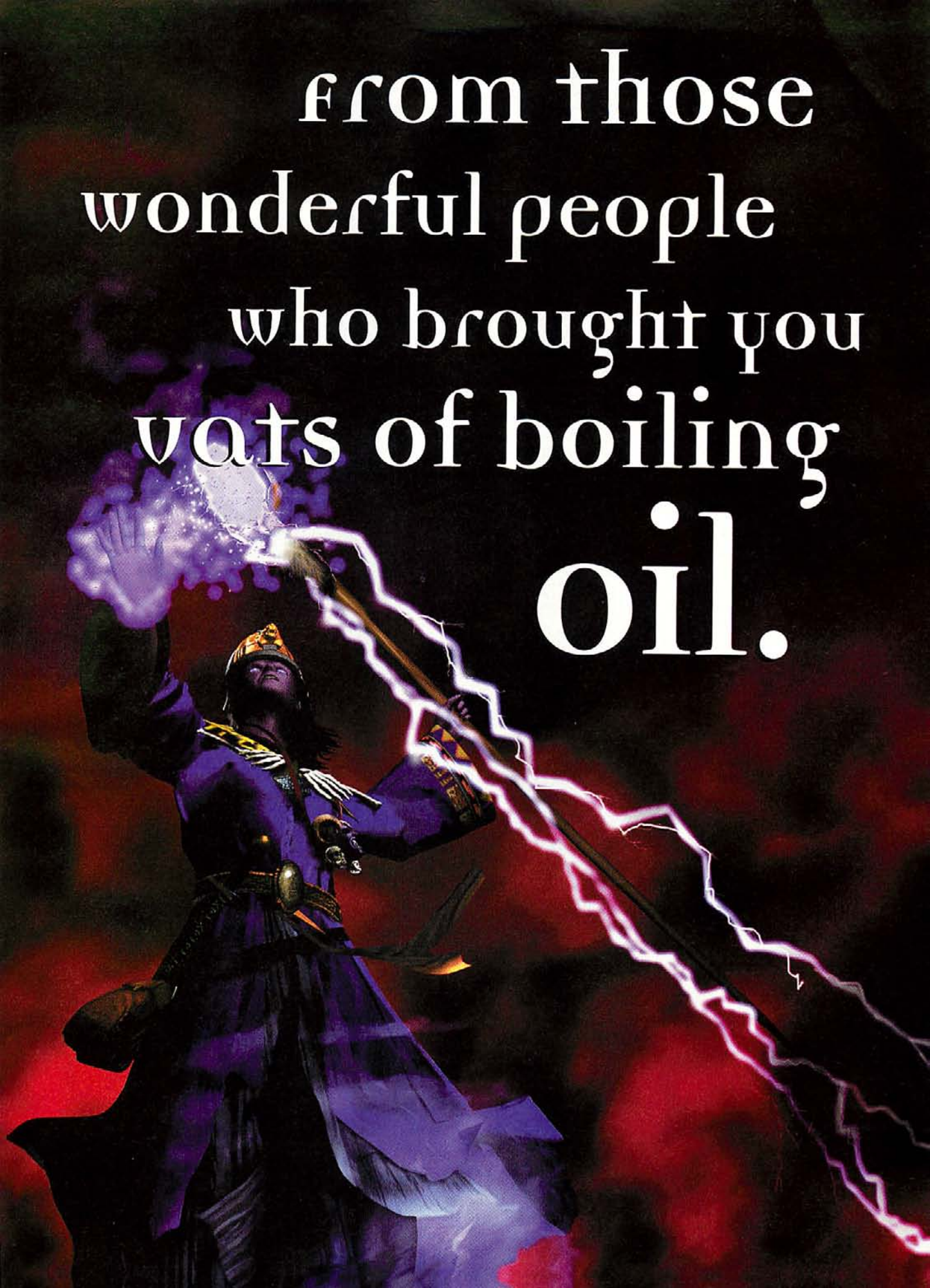
Category: Strategic
Developer: Will Wright
Publisher: Maxis
www.maxis.com
ETA: February 1998
Engine: 3D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Modern day
Multiplayer Max: None

Gameplay: SIMCITY 3000 isn't just an upgrade, but a true sequel with a raft of innovations and enhancements. This time, the urban building is much more sophisticated and gives gamers more power at all levels of city management. You'll have micro-simulators to let you tweak each individual building, which will go so far as to adjust rent/upkeep on a per-building basis or mix and match architecture of a given skyscraper. SIMCITY 3000 will also have a more sophisticated land use model so you can zone according to different categories. Now you'll have the option of zoning areas for government, manufacturing, retail, entertainment, and more.

If you want to micro-manage your city, you can plan the route of every police beat or even set burger price wars in your commercial district. If, however, you want to focus on city expansion, you can assign advisors to auto-manage the infrastructure that you've already put into place. Plus, the new SC3000 interface lets you instantly move to various points in the city via a point-and-click map square.

Extras: Another major difference between SIMCITY 3000 and its predecessors is that all of the buildings are constructed of 3D modular parts, each with a low, medium, or high detail level according to your desire (and processing power).

And, SIMCITY 3000 will let you walk through your city streets—you'll become a citizen in the 3D city you've created!


from those
wonderful people
who brought you
vats of boiling
oil.

LORDS OF MAGIC™



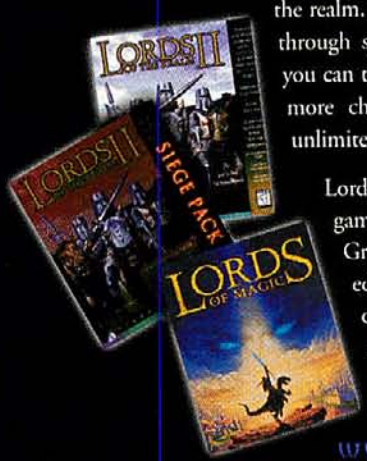
8 magical races

When the evil sorcerer Balkoth threatens the peaceful people of Urak with death and destruction, brave heroes with magical powers must rise up to stop the reign of terror and defeat the forces of tyranny. In Lords of Magic, the successor to the popular Lords of the Realm II, you enter a fantasy world where good and evil fight for primacy against a mystical backdrop of wizards, warriors, spells and storms, giants, gnomes, and Barbarians.



3-D terrain editor

Building on the dramatic features that made Lords of the Realm II a breakthrough in strategy gaming, Lords of Magic combines turn-based exploration and resource management with real-time combat. Join forces with others (up to six players can compete on a LAN or over the Internet) or marshal your forces to take on Balkoth and his Barbarian allies alone. You'll command up to Eighty creatures, including elves, vampires, skeletons, and gargoyles, as you defeat evil and save the realm. Wielding the forces of magic through spells and artifacts of power, you can take multiple paths to victory: more choices, more outcomes, and unlimited replayability.



Lords of Magic features a true 3-D game map, with 16 bit SVGA Graphics and a powerful map editor that puts you in control of terrain height, topography, and texture.



As you explore the land of urak, you'll battle in dark and mysterious caves, castles and dungeons

comes a my

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #364

Real-Time Strategy Reviews Index

Before You Buy, Consult This List for Every Real-Time Strategy Game We've Ever Rated!

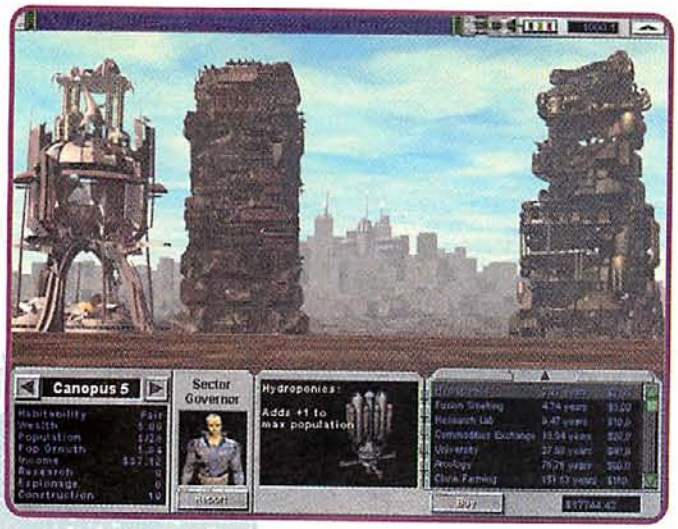
Game	Issue	Company	Rating
WarCraft: Orcs and Humans	January 1995	Blizzard	★★★★
Command & Conquer	December 1995	Westwood	★★★★
WarCraft II	March 1996	Blizzard	★★★★½
Warhammer: Shadow of the Horned Rat	March 1996	Mindscape	★★★★
This Means War!	April 1996	MicroProse	★★½
Close Combat	September 1996	Microsoft	★★★½
WarCraft II: Beyond the Dark Portal	September 1996	Blizzard	★★★★½
Z	November 1996	Virgin	★★★½
Gene Wars	January 1997	Bullfrog	★★★
Age of Sail	March 1997	TalonSoft	★★★
Lords of the Realm II	March 1997	Sierra	★★★★
C&C: Red Alert	March 1997	Westwood	★★★★½
Blood and Magic	April 1997	Interplay	★½
Harpoon Classic '97	April 1997	I-Magic	★★★★
Magic the Gathering: Battlemage	May 1997	Acclaim	★★½
Muzzle Velocity	June 1997	Digi4Fun	★★★
Star Command Revolution	June 1997	GT Interactive	★½
Red Alert: Counterstrike	July 1997	Westwood	★★★★
War Wind	January 1997	SSI	★★★★
Krush, Kill 'N' Destroy	August 1997	EA	★★½
Dungeon Keeper	October 1997	EA	★★★★½
Enemy Nations	October 1997	Windward	★★★
X-COM Apocalypse	October 1997	MicroProse	★★★★

5 Pax Imperia: Eminent Domain

Category: Strategic
Developer: Heliotrope
Publisher: THQ
www.thq.com
ETA: November 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 16

Premise: In this sequel to the Mac classic, PAX IMPERIA, you begin as one budding galactic civilization and expand into all corners of space, while competing scientifically, economically, and militarily with your alien neighbors.

Gameplay: In many ways, PAX IMPERIA: EMINENT DOMAIN (formerly PAX IMPERIA 2) is like a real-time MASTER OF ORION. You can choose to play as one of eight predetermined races, each with its own advantages and disadvantages, or you can create your own. You start with minimal technology and ship designs, and must then research more science, city structures, and ships. Gameplay occurs mostly on the galaxy map and in each planet view (you don't get to move around in the city; it's like looking at a MOO 2 colony). The game plays in realtime, which means that while you are moving, so are your computer or human opponents.



Once you enter combat, the game pauses and moves to a tactical, 2D, real-time engine. Since battles take place in space, combat isn't so much about maneuvering, but about making sure you've built the best ships using your impressive array of researched components.

Diplomacy is also important in the game, and you can engage in a variety of negotiations with your neighbors (including entering into treaties and trade agreements). You can also use sabotage and espionage, should you be so inclined. Unlike many other real-time games, you don't mine resources, but instead manage the resources of money (gained through taxation) and population (gained through planet growth), as in traditional 4x games.

Extras: Pax will have support for up to 16 players over LAN or Internet. For more on this real-time spaceploitation title, read our August '97 Sneak Preview.



6 Seven Kingdoms

Premise: You begin as one of seven ancient civilizations, but must grow to welcome all the other peoples of the world to create a multicultural empire that will dominate your rivals, both economically and militarily. You'll do this by setting up trade routes with neighbors, building large armies, researching technologies, and invoking each of your cultures' respective gods for assistance.

Gameplay: SEVEN KINGDOMS might look familiar (it looks as if the game's artists are paying respects to Blizzard's WARCRAFT II), but its gameplay is anything but the same old themes. You do start as one village, but the way you recruit more units is different. Each village is always growing, and you can recruit new units by simply conscripting them from the village. However, the more villagers you draft into service, the lower the village's loyalty rating. Low loyalty can lead to revolt, but you can draft villagers slowly and shower them with gifts to increase their loyalty.

As for resources, there are three metals you can mine, which you further refine into finished goods. These goods can then be sold or traded for gold, which you use in the production of units, weapons, and buildings.

When you conscript villagers, you can either leave them as regular workers, or train them into specialists (scientists, builders, or spies), who operate much more efficiently.

Extras: One fun feature of SEVEN KINGDOMS is the fantasy element. Monster lairs dot the world, and when these lairs are defeated, they yield gold and scrolls of power. Each culture has a corresponding scroll of power that only its people may wield. Each scroll allows its people to summon a Greater Being (god-like units that confer benefits on your troops and act as super-powerful hero units). If you want to be able to command all seven god-like entities, you'll need villages of each culture in your empire.

Category: Strategic
Developer: Trevor Chan and Enlight Studios
Publisher: Interactive Magic
www.imagicgames.com
ETA: Late 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Semi-historical fantasy
Multiplayer Max: 7

WAR IS HELL.

(ALTHOUGH WITH THE RIGHT GAME, IT'S ALSO SORT OF FUN.)



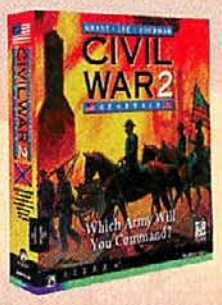
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FROM THE CREATORS OF ROBERT E. LEE: CIVIL WAR GENERAL



CIRCLE READER SERVICE #366

7 Lords of Magic



Category: Strategic
Developer: Impressions
Publisher: Sierra On-line
www.sierra.com
ETA: November 1997
Engine: 3D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: No
Setting: Fantasy
Multiplayer Max: 6

Premise: The murderous armies of the evil warlord Balkoth terrorize the free peoples of a fantasy world. As one of the leaders of these besieged people, you must face Balkoth, alone or with a coalition of allies.

Gameplay: The heir to Sierra's LORDS OF THE REALM II, LORDS OF MAGIC is actually a turn-based strategy game with a real-time tactical module.

In the strategy portion, you gain resources by hiring initiates to maintain marketplaces for gold, taverns to produce ale, temples to acquire crystals, and magistrates to spread your fame. Using these resources, you research spells, gather followers, and form armies of fantastic creatures, including vampires, giants, dragons, and a host of other beasts.

> **"Hurl armies** at each other with mouse clicks while casting spells into the fray."

As you move your armies and your onscreen avatar about the map, you discover artifacts, other settlements, and enemy creatures, whom you fight in a separate real-time tactical module. Gameplay in the tactical section is similar to the real-time games, as you hurl armies at each other with mouse clicks while casting spells into the fray.

There is also a diplomatic option so that you can secure allies in your quest to defeat Balkoth. Though the gameplay is rich, the interface is somewhat overwhelming, and the turn-based pace in the strategy portion might be too slow for a realtime junkie.

Extras: LORDS has a certain RPG feel: Your onscreen avatar gains experience as the game progresses, and you lose the game if your champion dies. The game will also ship with a game editor for creating new maps or modifying existing ones. The game is 3D, though LORDS' use of the technology isn't as innovative as that of DARK REIGN or MYTH. LORDS will have support for Internet, LAN, and modem play.

8 Tone Rebellion

Premise: Long ago, in a cluster of island worlds, a race of floating beings used a universe-binding substance called Tone to build a great civilization. However, an evil entity, called the Leviathan, corrupted the Tone, razed the floaters' civilization, and split them into four meager clans. Eons later, as the leader of one clan, you must break the Leviathan's hold on Tone and use it to unite your brethren and reclaim the island worlds.



Category: Strategic
Developer: Logic Factory
Publisher: Virgin Interactive
www.logicfactory.com
ETA: November 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Fantasy
Multiplayer Max: 4

Gameplay: TONE REBELLION is a strange and unique strategy game in which you have to collect three types of Tone from your world by building various receptacle buildings. Using this Tone, you build more structures that give you magic abilities and offensive troops.

You start in one region of your island world (each world contains several regions—each one screen in length), while the rest of the world is held by the Leviathan's creatures and structures. You can build structures only on Tone nodes, but most nodes already house Leviathan buildings. That means the Leviathan must contract in order for you to expand. As you claim more ground, you advance region by region, world by world, toward the Leviathan's stronghold.

You will encounter the other three clans of floaters and will have to either fight them over scarce Tone or ally with them to defeat the Leviathan.

TONE suffers from an uninformative and cumbersome interface. If the designers can offer better help and a more intuitive interface, TONE could be a surprising gem.

Extras: There are various artifacts peppered around the world (hidden inside Leviathan buildings). These, combined with a magic system, create even more depth for the game. TONE REBELLION also features a powerful musical score.

9 Entrepreneur



Category: Strategic
Developer/Publisher: Stardock
www.stardock.com
ETA: October 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Modern day
Multiplayer Max: 8

Premise: As CEO of a budding company, you strive to create a corporate empire that will dominate the world by researching, building, and marketing a product that you hope will bury the competition.

Gameplay: ENTREPRENEUR is not a business simulation. It is a game of corporate warfare, with the global market as your battleground, your sales and marketing forces as your foot soldiers, your engineers and researchers as your builders, and your products as your weapons of war. As chief executive, you must manage the manufacturing, research, and marketing departments of your company. After you choose a product, you build the necessary facilities and hire workers. These workers manufacture your product; research better versions of it; and create bigger, better, and nastier ad campaigns to sell it in all regions of the map.

Your rivals will be creating and selling their own competing products. You can combat them by reducing your prices, researching a better product, or engaging in positive or negative advertising. You can also play rare, special cards that negatively affect your competition (by sabotaging a rival's inventory or causing his workforce to go on strike, for example).

Although ENTREPRENEUR has a great deal of depth, the interface isn't too confusing, and the online help is generous. Though the game is in realtime, the pace is relatively slow compared to other games in our roundup. However, the slower pace gives you the time to build your corporate empire, which requires more micromanagement as it grows larger.

Extras: ENTREPRENEUR will have multiplayer support for eight gamers over Internet (at Stardock's own gaming site) or LAN. ENTREPRENEUR will be a Windows 95 and OS/2 title.

10 Outpost 2



Category: Strategic
Developer: Dynamix
Publisher: Sierra
www.sierra.com
ETA: September 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Sci-fi
Multiplayer Max: 6

Premise: Survivors from a destroyed Earth have colonized New Terra, a marginally habitable planet, and have split into two rival factions: Plymouth, which chooses to live harmoniously with the planet's environment, and Eden, which seeks to terraform the planet to an Earthlike state. As either colony, you must be wary of your rival—and the unforgiving planet—as you strive to sustain your settlement.

Gameplay: OUTPOST 2 differs greatly from its disastrous predecessor. This time, the game takes place in realtime, with more direction and focus. The original game was a toy, but OUTPOST 2 has two campaigns that follow a real storyline.

As in other real-time games, you harvest resources, but you also have to ship your raw resources to factories to create refined materials that you use in building and vehicle construction. Aside from working with obvious resources (mined ore and refined metals), you have to manage the population of your colony, which you can sustain and enhance by building nurseries and hospitals.

In each scenario, you also have to research technology, which leads to new types of vehicles and better machines of war. While there is quite a bit of combat in the game (against the rival colony), there is plenty of noncombative gameplay, including basic colony management and research.

Extras: OUTPOST 2 supports multiplayer games that can be cooperative or competitive, with players free to assign various (noncombative) victory conditions. In general, OUTPOST 2 is a decent real-time game, with much more depth than expected, especially with the population management, research, and storyline. Random events such as volcanic eruptions and earthquakes occur during the game—a very cool feature that creates the sense that the planet really is hostile.

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #063

11 Constructor



Category: Strategic
Developer: System 3
Publisher: Acclaim
www.acclaimnation.com
ETA: Fall 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: Yes
Building: Yes
Setting: Modern day
Multiplayer Max: 4

Premise: You're a new real-estate developer out to make a name for yourself. Whether you want to create an urban heaven or just get filthy rich, you'll basically try to create the most utopian neighborhood for your tenants while making your opponent's neighborhood more like a red-light district.

Gameplay: CONSTRUCTOR resembles SIMCITY, but with a focus on people. In addition to erecting buildings, you'll be attending to the wants and needs of the tenants in your establishments.

Building construction is more like that of WARCRAFT II than that of SIMCITY. Instead of just placing a building square on the screen, you'll actually have to first lay out the plot of land and then assign construction workers to build the actual structure. You'll then have to search for suitable tenants to live in the building and determine whether they will pay rent or have children who will become new tenants or workers. Finally, you'll need to keep your tenants happy by building factories that produce goodies (such as double-paned windows or picket fences) that improve your apartment houses.

On top of that, you get the "attitude" aspect when it comes to sabotaging competitors' neighborhoods. Your methods include mob hits, jail breaks, frat parties, hippie sit-ins, and psychotic clowns. Sometimes these things can be resolved only through combat, adding a little real-time combat to the city management.

Extras: CONSTRUCTOR has five types of games, each with a different goal, such as building a neighborhood or taking over the entire world. There is also multiplayer support over LAN or in head-to-head modem play. CONSTRUCTOR should be a decent game that adds a dash of real-time combat and lots of humor and attitude to a genre dominated by SIMCITY.

—Thierry Nguyen

12 Evolution



Category: Strategic
Developer: Crossover Technologies
Publisher: Discovery Channel
evolution.discovery.com
ETA: October 1997
Engine: 2D
Resource Management: No
Building: No
Setting: Prehistorical
Multiplayer Max: 6

Premise: You start out as an amphibious creature from the Carboniferous era. You must survive and evolve into the dominant and intelligent life form of the planet, fending off threats from other evolving creatures and the hostile planet.

Gameplay: EVOLUTION is a fairly open-ended real-time game, as you start from the very dawn of life. You choose from a variety of amphibious creatures to play and then evolve into a more advanced organism over various epochs. No matter what type of creature you play, you must guide it around the world, finding ideal grazing or hunting lands for it and evading or defeating its predatory enemies. All the while, the planet itself changes, as the game's timeline stretches through hundreds of millions of years. Continents drift apart and collide, as tectonic activity shapes and reshapes your world, while extraterrestrial phenomena, such as asteroids and radiation from supernovae, alter the planet at random.

You'll play against up to five other players, and your goal will be to keep your creature alive and evolve it toward one of six intelligent life forms (humans are but one). The first to do so wins.

Gamers used to fast-paced games that constantly engage your mind should know that EVOLUTION is slower paced than many of the other real-time games and doesn't require constant management.

Extras: One of the very cool features of EVOLUTION is that you can take your favorite extinct animal (say, T. rex) and, through careful management of its feeding habits and defenses, ensure that it lives long enough to evolve to the next level and gain intelligence.

The game will support six-player LAN and head-to-head modem play.

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KIDS TO ADULTS K-A CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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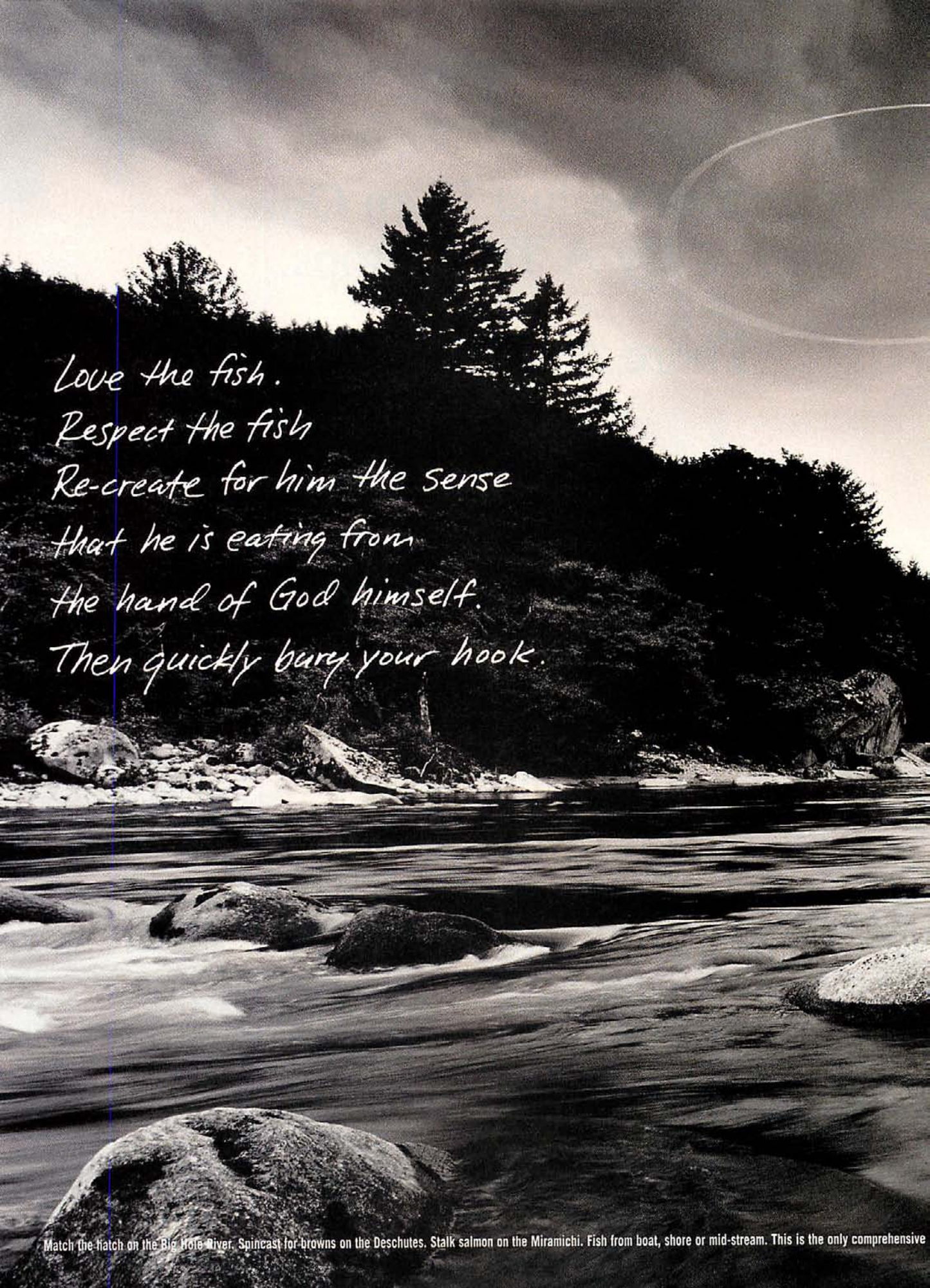
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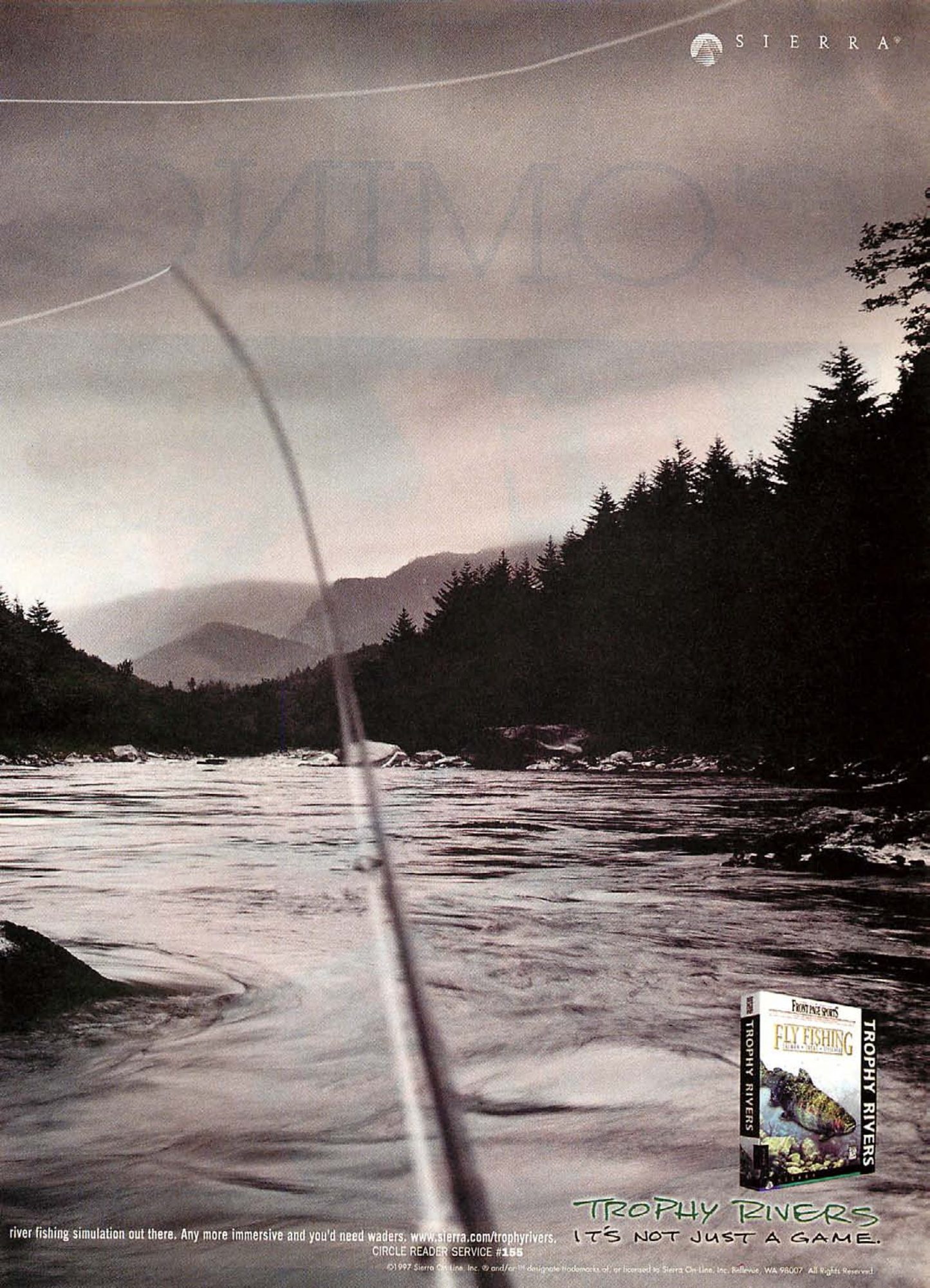
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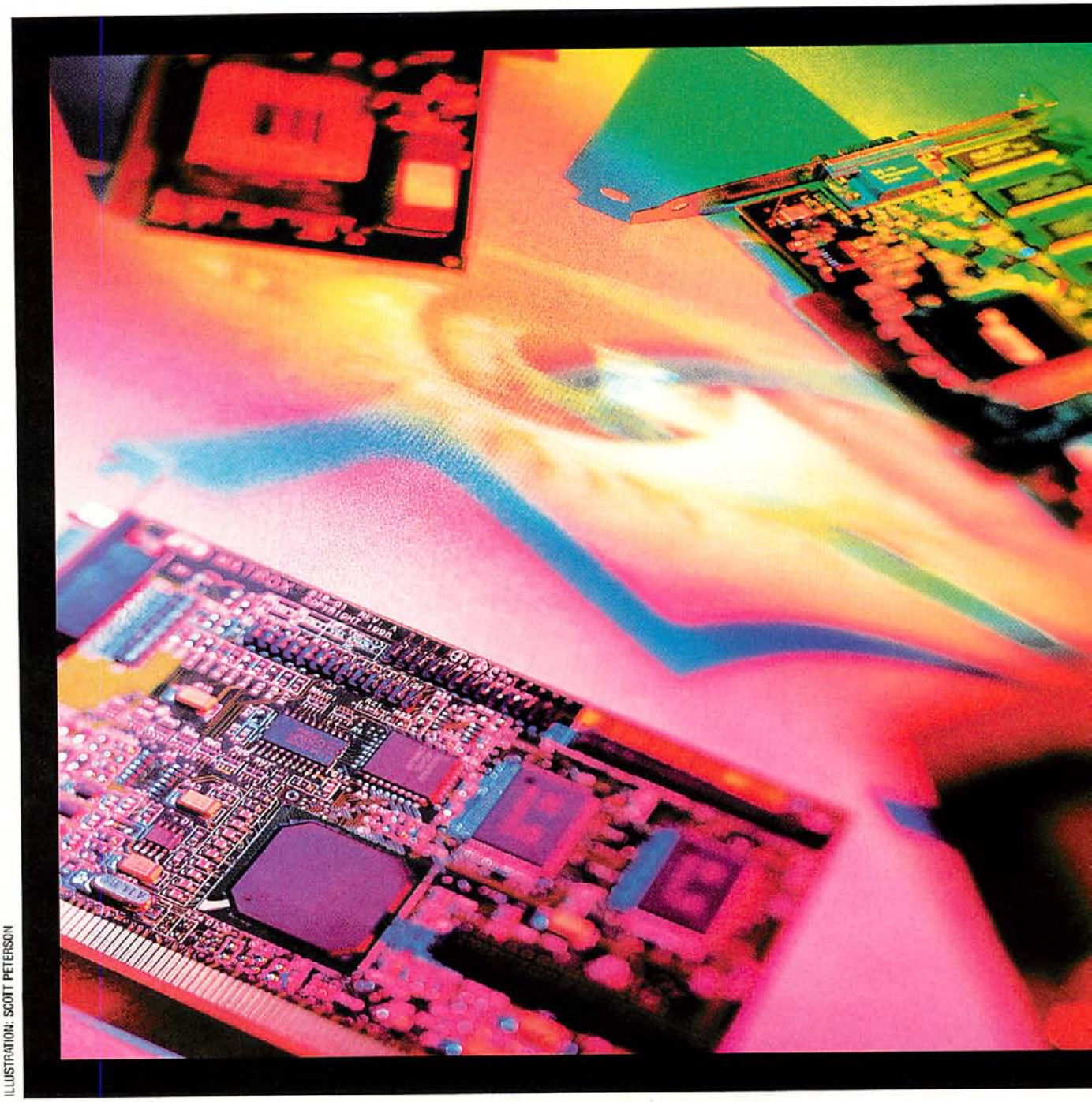


ILLUSTRATION: SCOTT PETERSON

OF AGE



AFTER A BUMPY RIDE, MANY NEXT-GENERATION 3D GRAPHICS CARDS ARE READY TO ROLL

A year ago, the choice in 3D graphics accelerators was clear-cut. If you had the bucks, you got a 3Dfx add-on card. If that was too pricey, your alternative was one of the Rendition-based cards (other 3D accelerators proved too slow—particularly S3 ViRGE cards—or lacked important image-enhancement features). This year's crop of cards, for the most part, is much faster than last year's, and includes a richer set of features.

Noticeably absent from this year's graphics card roundup are S3 ViRGE-based cards. There are a lot of cards out there, it's true, but most card vendors didn't seem interested in having their S3 products tested. And while S3 seems to be regrouping, they're busy at work on two new graphics engines which will most likely see the light of day next spring.

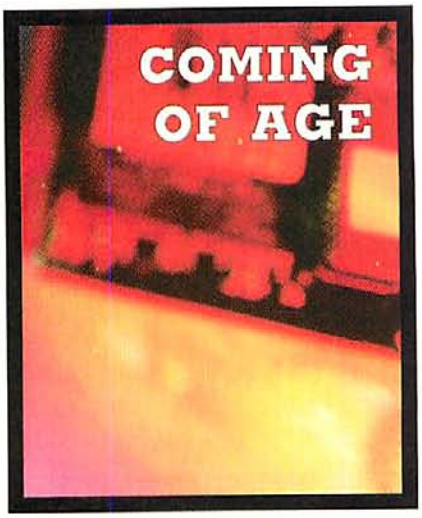


The temporary absence of S3 was more than made up for by a host of new chips from NVIDIA, Number Nine, Trident, and 3DLabs. Returning to the fray are 3Dfx (particularly with its Voodoo Rush part); Rendition, with its new V2200; and ATI, with a much-enhanced Rage Pro chip. With a couple of exceptions, all of these cards proved very impressive in our tests, but all had one or two flaws. There's a lot of ground to cover, so let's dive right in and "do the numbers."

BY LOYD CASE

On the Shelf

This year, we pushed ourselves to the limit to get the latest and greatest graphics cards to review. The net result was a number of near-shipping or very late beta cards (mostly drivers—the hardware was solid). So to be fair, we're dividing this roundup into three sections: cards that were shipping (or about to hit the street) when we tested them in August, cards that are shipping now, as you read this, and cards that are out there on the horizon. The next few cards were actually in or on their way to store shelves when we reviewed them.



Number Nine Revolution 3D

This card uses Number Nine's "Ticket to Ride" chip, a third-generation variant of their Imagine 128 chip architecture, which adds a host of texture-mapping and image-enhancement features to an already fast accelerator.



NUMBER NINE REVOLUTION 3D

APPEAL: CAD, DTP, and 3D modelers who occasionally dabble in gaming.

PROS: Speedy 2D; great 3D feature set; decent 3D performance.

CONS: Expensive; limited bells and whistles.

The result was an impressive 108 3D WinBench score on our test-bed P55C/200 system. Windows 2D speed was impressive, too—the Revolution split WinBench 97 honors with the RIVA 128-equipped Diamond Viper.

The Revolution is available in either 4MB or 8MB versions and is expandable up to 16MB. It doesn't have other bells and whistles, such as TV-out or video in. From a gaming perspective, its DOS performance is subpar, though not hideously slow. It's also pricey—at $349 for a 4MB card, the Revolution is the most expensive card in our roundup. The card installs easily, and the drivers ship on a CD-ROM.

There are a couple of problems with the Revolution. MDK and the Direct3D version of MECHWARRIOR: MERCENARIES had severe audio stuttering that severely affected frame rate. We didn't see this in any other Direct3D games, and it seems to be one indication of the immaturity of both D3D titles and drivers. Despite the high 3D WinBench score, game scores were less impressive. The TERRAMARK score was fairly low and the FLIGHT SIMULATOR 98 frame rate was simply mediocre. Overall, the Revolution 3D is quite a speedy Windows card, and may be a dandy card for CAD or publishing applications, but its game performance is just a little slower than we'd like to see.

Price: *$349 (4MB); $449 (8MB)*
Contact: *Number Nine Visual Technology (800) GET-NINE*
www.nine.com

Jaton Blaze 3D Ultimate

This low-cost card offers a slew of bells and whistles (TV-out, optional video capture, and TV tuner add-ons). Based on the Trident 975 2D/3D accelerator, the Blaze 3D boasts a wide assortment of 3D image-enhancement features. This card shows how much 3D cards have advanced—last year, the Blaze 3D would have been near the top of the heap, but now it's near the bottom.

The 3D WinBench score was lackluster, at 60.8; the Direct3D titles fared relatively poorly as well. Even MOTO RACER—a somewhat forgiving application—ran slowly, although performance was acceptable. DOS performance was better, with reasonably robust SVGA-graphics performance. The card ships with a pair of Sega titles, VIRTUA FIGHTER PC and DAYTONA USA, as well

JATON BLAZE 3D ULTIMATE

APPEAL: Gamers on a very tight budget looking for something better than the S3 spread.

PROS: It's cheap; good graphics quality.

CONS: Fairly slow in 3D and Windows 2D.



as with the Trispectives 3D modeling program. Installation is typical Plug-and-Play, and the drivers ship on a CD-ROM.

The Jaton Blaze 3D may be interesting to those on a tight budget. It certainly offers very nice image quality—but don't expect fast frame rates from this one.

Price: *$99 (2MB), $129 (4MB)*
Contact: *Jaton Corp., (408) 934-9369*
www.jaton.com

Diamond Viper330

This card ran 3D WinBench so fast, it finished before I could blink. Okay, so that's an exaggeration. It did, however, post the single fastest 3D WinBench score in the roundup—a blistering 136. Benchmarks don't tell the whole story, though. Direct3D games ran very, very fast as well. The only fly in the ointment was a page fault generated in the beta version of FLIGHT SIMULATOR 98, probably due to a driver bug. The Viper's TERRAMARK score was among the leaders and it generated the fastest MOTO RACER frame rate tested.



DIAMOND VIPER 330

APPEAL: Gamers looking for the ultimate in Direct3D performance—without sacrificing 2D.

PROS: It's fast in 3D. It's fast in 2D. It's fast in DOS. Any questions?

CONS: 4MB limitation; it doesn't run GL QUAKE.

This card is no slouch at 2D either, generating the highest true-color WinBench 97 score and a very close second at 16-bit color. VGA- and SVGA-graphics were stellar as well, cranking out a startling average of 17.77fps on QUAKE's TimeDemos (at 640x480). About the only downside to the onboard RIVA 128 chip is that it's limited to 4MB of RAM, though the RIVA supports a special DMA mode that allows it to rapidly retrieve textures from the main memory.

Installation is a breeze, and the software bundle is terrific as well. In addition to the seemingly omnipresent MOTO RACER and MDK: MISSION LAGUNA BEACH, it comes with

▸▸▸continued on pg 221

What Does AGP Bring to the Party?

There's been much ado about Intel's forthcoming Accelerated Graphics Port (AGP). Promising anywhere from 2X to 4X increases in bandwidth over the current PCI bus, AGP is the biggest move forward PC graphics have made since the introduction of local bus about four years ago. Why the need for this new graphics architecture? Three reasons: games, games, and—you guessed it—games.

Games using 3D graphics will actually "break" the PCI bus in the near future, necessitating a new architecture. Intel's response: AGP. And while some initial AGP implementations by 3D chip makers will closely resemble PCI version 2.1, there are important differences as to how AGP will allow game developers to use more textures and scale up polygon counts in their game scenes, all the while maintaining at least 30fps. To get a better sense of how AGP works, let's first take a look at how PCI works in 3D games, and then what AGP does to speed things along.

> **"Games using 3D graphics will actually "break" the PCI bus in the near future."**

Graphics accelerators currently live on the PCI bus, a 32-bit bus running at 33MHz, which delivers a peak bandwidth of 132MB/sec. Real-world sustained data rates are closer to the 90–100MB/sec range, and while that may seem fast, demanding 3D games will soon be able to consume all of that bandwidth, and then some.

Game developers use a graphics board's video memory, also called local video memory, to store two screens' worth of data, called the front buffer and back buffer (hence the term "double-buffering") and a Z-buffer for storing depth information. The remaining local video memory, called a texture cache, is used to store textures. Any texture data the developer can't fit into local video memory is stored in system memory; when it's needed, it's copied into local video memory for processing. But the penalty is that the texture data is copied over at only about 100MB/sec, whereas the graphics processor can fetch data at nearly eight times that rate from its local video memory.

AGP addresses this problem in two fundamental ways: First, the bus speed of AGP is 66MHz, effectively doubling the peak bandwidth to 264MB/sec for moving data between local video memory and system memory (real-world data rates will probably be closer to 200MB/sec). Some graphics vendors, ATI most notably, have implemented AGP 2X, wherein they can transfer data on both the rising and falling edges of the bus clock, effectively quadrupling AGP's peak bandwidth to 528MB/sec compared to PCI's 132MB/sec. In addition, AGP allows chip makers to implement pipelining of data requests. So, in the PCI world, data request 2 can't occur until data request 1's transfer has completed. AGP, however, allows data request 2 to be issued while data request 1's transfer is still occurring. The depth of this pipeline will depend on the individual chip.

Second, AGP lets programmers allocate a piece of system memory as "AGP memory" for storing textures, and address this memory as "nonlocal video memory." In other words, to the graphics processor, this piece of system memory now

▸▸▸continued on pg 218





What Does AGP Bring to the Party?

▸▸▸continued from pg 217

looks like an extension of local video memory. Several initial AGP chips will still have to copy texture data into local video memory before processing it, but at least they'll be able to do this copy much faster.

To address the performance hit associated with texture copying, AGP graphics chips can optionally implement Direct Memory Execute, also called AGP Texturing. In supporting this feature, an accelerator chip can grab a piece of texture data from AGP memory and begin processing it without first having to copy it into local video memory.

As an example, we tested ATI's Rage Pro chip in both an AGP and PCI configuration using 3D WinBench 97's Large Texture test. This test has enough texture data to make the 3D chip store textures in system memory. The AGP version of Rage Pro's frame rate was 8X that of the PCI version, a substantial difference. Of course, not every game will automatically see this kind of speed-up, but it shows how AGP can kick open the bandwidth door.

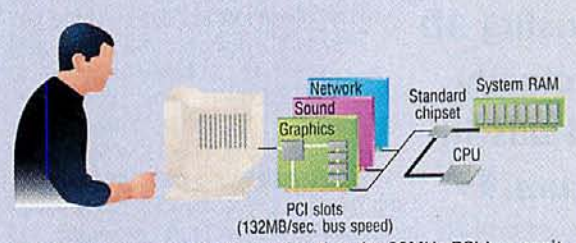
So how will AGP speed along 3D games? All current 3D titles will see some gain in speed thanks to AGP's faster data rate, relative to PCI. Games written to be AGP-aware will be able to use more textures and more quickly access them from system memory. Chips supporting Execute mode will be able to process texture data directly from system memory, adding another favorable bump to game performance. In addition, AGP will enable larger polygon counts, since growing polygon vertex data is becoming another PCI bandwidth muncher. These larger polygon counts will make for more complex, and more realistic, game scenes. AGP systems and motherboards should be available as you're reading this, and investing in an AGP-enabled system or motherboard will serve you well for at least the next two years.

One note of caution: If you're currently considering an AGP system, make sure the graphics card lives in an AGP slot, not on the motherboard. There can be only one AGP device in a system, and if you purchase a system with the AGP graphics chip on the motherboard, you won't be able to upgrade the graphics chip further down the line. We'll be looking at several in next month's Part I of our Ultimate Gaming Machine series, so stay tuned to see who's got the hot AGP box for the holidays. *—Dave Salvator*

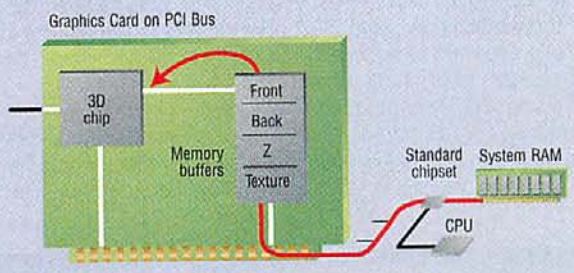
Can I Ride Your Magic Bus?

Intel's forthcoming Accelerated Graphics Port (AGP) will allow game developers to use more textures and higher polygon counts without sacrificing speed. It does this with higher bus speeds and texture management. Here's how it works:

Life on PCI

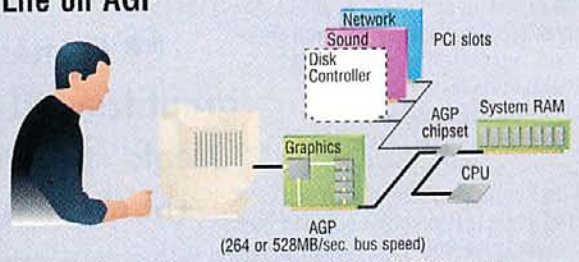


Games are becoming so demanding that the 33MHz PCI bus can't handle the volume of information that needs to move across it.

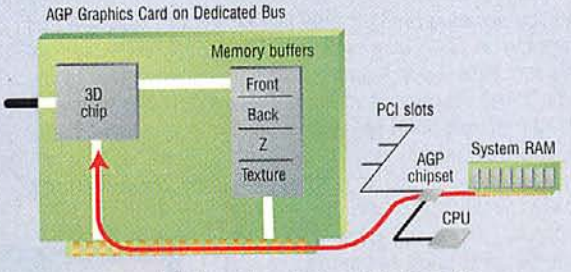


When present-day graphics cards run out of onboard memory, they store texture data in System RAM. When needed, data is copied to the card's local memory for processing.

Life on AGP



AGP gives the graphics card its own dedicated 66MHz, higher-bandwidth bus.



AGP's "Execute mode" allows the chip to grab texture data directly from a specially allocated portion of System RAM, without first having to copy it to the card's local texture memory.

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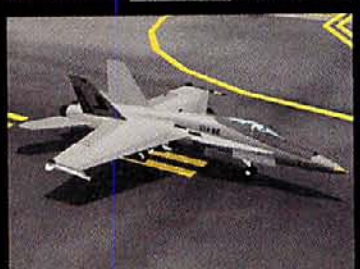
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #065

GRAPHIC SIMULATIONS CORPORATION

continued from pg 217

the full version of I-Magic's iF-22, one of the best jet fighter simulators around—and one that is well matched to the Viper's high-performance Direct3D engine. Oh, did we mention that it has TV-out as well?

In fact, the only thing that kept us from giving the Viper 330 a perfect score was the Flight Simulator 98 problem (the Viper was the only card with this problem). If I wanted any one of these cards to appear under my tree this Christmas, this would be it.

Price: *$199 (4 MB)*
Contact: *Diamond Multimedia, (800) 468-5846*
www.diamondmm.com

Hercules Stingray 128 3D/TV

We reviewed the original Stingray 128/3D in an earlier issue and found it an interesting card with some significant flaws. We're happy to report that Hercules has gone back to the drawing board and fixed most of the problems, boosted maximum memory to a full 8MB, and added TV-out.



The new Stingray 128, based on 3Dfx's Voodoo Rush chipset for 3D and Alliant's AT3D part for 2D, is fairly speedy, though its 2D WinBench 97 numbers lagged, particularly in true-color mode. Its 3D WinBench score was a speedy 120. Direct3D games also ran quite well, with the usual high image-quality associated with 3Dfx technology. Windows 2D wasn't quite as robust, but DOS VGA- and SVGA-graphics scores were respectable. We're happy to report that Hercules has added VESA 2.0 SVGA-graphics capability to this newest member of the Stingray family. Like most modern graphics cards, it's a snap to install (assuming you're comfortable opening up your system).

The only oddity in the performance numbers was the GL Quake TimeDemo tests. The Stingray only posted scores of slightly better than 20fps—dedicated 3Dfx accelerators generally run GL Quake at closer to 30fps. In theory, an 8MB card could run GL Quake at 800x600, but you'd better have a fast Pentium II to do it.

HERCULES STINGRAY I28 3D/TV

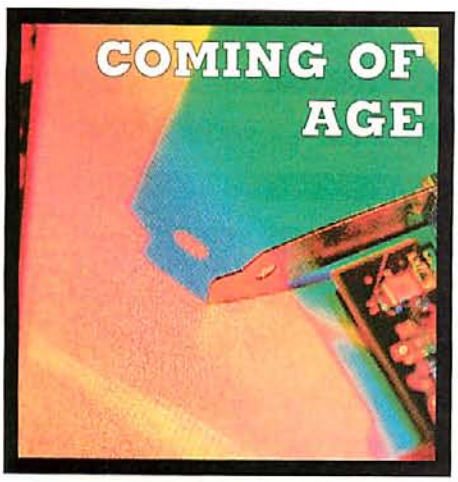
APPEAL: Gamers looking for 3Dfx and 2D on a single card.

PROS: Excellent 3D performance and image quality; solid DOS SVGA-graphics.

CONS: Expensive; slow Windows 2D.

This second time around, the Stingray 128 3D/TV is a nice card that is a perfect fit in any gamer's system. It's a bit pricey, but high performance sometimes comes with a price. And it *does* run GL Quake.

Price: *$269 (6MB), $299 (8MB)*
Contact: *Hercules Computer Technology (800) 532-0600*
www.hercules.com



Apocalypse 3Dx

The PowerVR chip is a mysterious animal. Designed in the era before there was a Direct3D, NEC has had some teething problems with its Direct3D drivers. They finally have shipping drivers, but this interesting chip still remains something of an enigma. In some ways, it's reminiscent of the Gravis Ultrasound—very interesting technology with great performance, but one requiring a lot of tweaking. The PowerVR control panel, for example, has several settings which would baffle a neophyte user. Sure, you don't have to tweak them for the most part, but when you do....

Benchmark performance was less than stellar, posting a 3D WinBench score of 70.3. Games—the real benchmarks here—fared better. While Flight Simulator 98 scores were low, Terramark scores were acceptable and Moto Racer ran reasonably fast. Some Direct3D titles looked really good—MDK for example—while others couldn't seem to handle the same effects as MDK (transparency, for example). The good news for PowerVR fans is the appearance of GL Quake. On the PowerVR, GL Quake ran at a very respectable 27.4fps—nearly as good as it runs on a dedicated 3Dfx board, and better than it runs on the Voodoo Rush cards. Image quality wasn't quite equal to the 3Dfx, but it was close.



APOCALYPSE 3DX

APPEAL: Gamers looking for an alternative to 3Dfx at a lower price.

PROS: Low cost, excellent image quality and performance in direct-ported titles; now runs GL Quake.

CONS: Direct3D performance is spotty.

And therein lies the rub. The PowerVR is a very interesting architecture; its chunk-based rendering potentially enables great performance at a fairly low cost, but it's somewhat outside the Direct3D mainstream. At $149, the Apocalypse 3Dx is an interesting alternative to the more standard fare—especially with its great software bundle of Tomb Raider and Ultim@te Racer. NEC recently announced that it had a $25 million war chest to spend on making sure game developers got the PowerVR message, so titles will more than likely be there. We hope the Direct3D drivers will also improve over time.

Price: *$149; $99 upgrade for existing Apocalypse 3D owners*
Contact: *Videologic, (800) 578 5644*
www.videologic.com

Hercules Dynamite 3D/GL

Hercules was once synonymous with high-performance cards for CAD and modeling;

the Dynamite 3D/GL is an attempt to return to those roots. The 3D/GL uses the Permedia 2 3D acceleration engine, coupled with 8MB of 125MHz (8ns access time) SGRAM. Performance was pretty good, although the drivers weren't quite final at press time. The card's OpenGL driver couldn't quite handle GL QUAKE's texture-mapping requirements, either, even though it's a full ICD (Installable Client Driver) OpenGL driver for Windows 95.

The trouble with GL QUAKE aside, overall performance is fairly impressive, for the most part. It broke the 100 barrier in 3D WinBench on our test-bed, posting a score of 106. It was mid-pack for 2D WinBench 97 scores. And DOS scores were surprisingly good, though the lack of VESA 2.0 hampered our testing. We did notice that DUKE NUKEM 3D suffered from extreme color distortion and was basically unplayable.

The 3D/GL doesn't support VESA 2.0, though Hercules will be shipping a special version of Scitech Display Doctor 6.0, which does add VESA 3.0 support to the Permedia 2. At $349 for an 8MB card, it's the second most expensive card in our roundup. Still, if you're looking for a professional quality card for 2D graphics and 3D animation and you do some serious gaming, the 3D/GL just might be the ticket, especially with software VESA drivers.



HERCULES DYNAMITE 3D/GL

APPEAL: Graphics professionals looking for a versatile card that can handle games.

PROS: Fast 3D and reasonable 2D scores; great game performance.

CONS: No VESA 2.0 support in firmware; pricey.

Price: *$349 (8MB)*
Contact: *Hercules Computer Technology (800) 532-0600*
www.hercules.com

Intergraph Intense 3D Voodoo

Intergraph blew onto the consumer graphics scene last winter with their Intense 3D 100, a low-cost card using the Rendition Vérité V1000 chip. That initial dip into the consumer PC fray seems to have whetted their appetite—not only are they now shipping a 3Dfx Voodoo-Rush-based board, but they have also signed up game distribution giant Electronics Arts to help spread the word.



And the word is good. While the Intense 3D Voodoo isn't quite as fast as the Hercules Stingray 128,

How We Tested

While it was tempting to use the latest Pentium II systems for the testing, we chose instead to use the latest incarnation of *CGW*'s budget gaming rig. The system uses an ASUS TX97-XE motherboard (430TX chipset), P55C/200 (Pentium with MMX Technology), 32MB of SDRAM, a 3.2GB EIDE hard-disk, and a Panasonic 24X CD-ROM drive. The monitor was a 19-inch Hitachi 751.

We ran a total of four synthetic benchmarks: 3D WinBench 97 to test raw Direct3D rendering performance; WinBench 97 Business Graphics WinMark at two resolutions (1024x768x16 and 800x600x32); Eidos Interactive's TERRAMARK benchmark (based on their Direct3D game TERRACIDE); and the CBench SVGA-graphics benchmark. With TERRACIDE, we measured the frame rate at the opening of the first save game that comes with the demo. We also used several Direct3D game titles that had performance metrics (such as frame-rate counters) built into them. These included Electronic Arts' MOTO RACER and a release candidate version of Microsoft FLIGHT SIMULATOR 98. In MOTO

	3D WinBench 97	MOTO RACER FR	MS FLIGHT SIM 98 Demo	TERRAMARK Init. FR	CBench SVGA
Diamond Viper 330	133	37	Does Not Run	37	44.4
Hercules 3D/GL	106	29	17	28	46.3
Hercules Stingray 128	121	30	19	37	41
Intergraph Intense 3D	120	26	16	37	41
Jaton Blaze 3D Ult.	60.8	13	10	25	41.1
Number Nine Rev. 3D	108	22	12	18	36
STB Velocity 128	131	31	16	Does Not Run	44.5
Apocalypse 3Dx	70.3	22	12	30	No 2D Functionality



it's less expensive, at only $229 for a 6MB card. As with the Stingray, the Intense 3D Voodoo depends on the Alliant Promotion AT3D chip for 2D performance. The card ships with a great bundle, too, which includes TUROK and the 3Dfx-enhanced version of AH-64 LONGBOW. The Direct3D scores trail the Stingray by a bit, but 2D scores are right in line. Image quality looked like classic 3Dfx. Like the Stingray, GL QUAKE numbers seemed oddly low compared to a dedicated Voodoo accelerator. The card installs easily and, in a nod to the Intel/Microsoft PC 98 spec, has TV-out.

INTERGRAPH INTENSE 3D VOODOO

APPEAL: Anyone wanting a 3Dfx card and 2D card in a single slot.

PROS: 3Dfx image quality; good 3D performance; GL Quake.

CONS: Mid-pack 2D performance; slower than dedicated 3Dfx cards.

Intergraph developed a solid reputation for service with their Intense 3D 100, and we're hoping they continue that with the 3D Voodoo. It's definitely worth a look.

Price: *$229*
Contact: *Intergraph Computer Corp. (800) 763-0242*
www.intergraph.com/ics

STB Velocity 128

STB was the first company to announce a card using NVIDIA's hot new RIVA 128 chip. Being a pioneer sometimes has its travails, but the Velocity 128 has finally hit the streets. At $199, it's a fast card at a reasonable price.

Like the Diamond Viper 330, which uses the same chipset, the STB had some teething problems. Unlike the Viper, it ran the FLIGHT SIMULATOR 98 beta just fine—but the TERRAMARK benchmark, based on the Eidos title TERRACIDE, only ran with a highly distorted image. This is either a driver or BIOS issue; it didn't even affect the TERRACIDE game, just the benchmark.



STB VELOCITY 128

APPEAL: Gamers looking for an easy-to-use, very fast 2D/3D combo.

PROS: Fast 3D; very fast DOS.

CONS: 4MB limit; Windows 95 2D-performance trails a bit.

The card posted a 3D WinBench score of 131, equivalent to the Viper. Other performance metrics were very close, except for 2D WinBench numbers. The Velocity 3D, like a lot of the newer cards, has TV-out. One of the coolest features, though, is STB's new control panel setup. It's easily one of the slickest we've seen, allowing you to easily adjust almost any video parameter.

If you're looking for a very fast 2D/3D combination, as well as a good user interface to control your video, you needn't look any further.

Price: *$199*
Contact: *STB Systems, (972) 234-8750*
www.stb.com

RACER, we measured the frame rate in the "Speed Bay" course in practice mode, immediately after the flag drops. In FLIGHT SIMULATOR 98, we used the canned demo file, measuring the frame rate in the first ten seconds of the demo, which is an external view of a Cessna 182 on the ground at Meigs Airfield. We also ran several other Direct3D games just to get an impression for game-play and image quality, including the Direct3D version of MECHWARRIOR: MERCENARIES, the recent demo of LucasArts' SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE and Shiny's MDK. To test DirectDraw performance, we used WinQUAKE (specifying the –nowindirect option to force DirectDraw usage) and averaged the three TimeDemo tests at 640x480. For testing DOS game performance, we used QUAKE's TimeDemo tests, posting the average of TimeDemos 1, 2, and 3 at 640x480. Where appropriate, we used GL QUAKE as well.

Bear in mind the EPA adage, "Your mileage may vary." All of these cards showed strengths and weaknesses but, overall, this is the strongest batch of contenders we've seen in a long time.

	WinBench 97 Business Graphics WinMark 800x600x32	WinBench 97 Business Graphics WinMark 1024x768x16	QUAKE TimeDemos at 640x480	WinQUAKE TimeDemos at 640x480
Diamond Viper 330	106	103	15.2	17.8
Hercules 3D/GL	87.5	83.7	14.3	Does Not Support VESA 2.0
Hercules Stingray 128	64.7	74.3	14	16.1
Intergraph Intense 3D	65.7	74.2	14.4	14.4
Jaton Blaze 3D Ult.	72.4	74.3	13.7	16.1
Number Nine Rev. 3D	104	104	13.1	12.5
STB Velocity 128	87.4	85.3	15.8	17.8
Apocalypse 3Dx	No 2D Functionality	No 2D Functionality	No 2D Functionality	No 2D Functionality

Close ...Very Close

The following cards were not quite ready for prime time when we checked them out, but they were getting pretty close—certainly close enough to get a rough assessment of what to expect. While we'll comment on performance in a general way, we decided against publishing benchmark scores in order to be fair. We'll revisit the performance of these products when they ship.

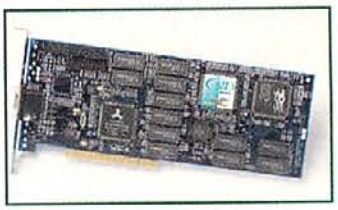
Hercules Thriller 3D

The Thriller 3D rounds out the triad of new graphics cards from Hercules. Based on the long-awaited Rendition V2200 chip, the 3D performance looked very good using very early drivers. Hercules has paired up the V2200 with 8ns SGRAM. The card will have both TV-out and video inputs. Initial Windows performance was ho-hum, but DOS SVGA-graphics scores looked good. And true to Rendition's form, Thriller's initial 3D WinBench 97 performance (running beta drivers) is on par with the RIVA 128 boards we looked at, and Hercules may be able to wring a little more 3D performance out of the chip yet. The V2200 is backward compatible with the V1000, but some titles may need to be updated (VQUAKE, for instance). The overall Direct3D performance looked very balanced and solid; we're eagerly awaiting the final drivers.

Price: *$179 (4MB), $249 (8MB)*
Contact: *Hercules Computer Technology, (800) 532-0600*
www.hercules.com

Jazz Adrenaline Rush 3D

The Adrenaline Rush is yet another Voodoo Rush card using the Alliant Promotion AT3D chip for 2D acceleration. Jazz supplied us with a production card and beta drivers that were pretty close to shipping-quality, although the Windows 2D-performance needed some fine tuning. The 3D performance was pretty much what we've come to expect for Voodoo Rush. At a street price of $215 for a 6MB card, this is currently the lowest-priced 6MB Voodoo Rush part to hit the market. Bundle information wasn't final at press time, but we do know a 3Dfx-accelerated version of Acclaim's TUROK will be part of the package.



Jazz is looking to improve its reputation in the graphics card arena, and the Adrenaline Rush may fit the bill. They've signed agreements that may give them wider distribution, but are also exploring alternate sales vehicles, such as the Web.

Price: *$215*
Contact: *Jazz Multimedia, (408) 727-8900*
www.jazzmm.com

ATI Xpert@ Play

ATI's last efforts in the 3D game, the Rage and Rage II chips, met with mixed reviews, particularly when it came to 3D performance. Based on our preliminary testing, ATI should probably win an award for most improved chip design. The Rage Pro is much faster in 3D than the Rage II, even with the early drivers—and ATI has indicated that the best is yet to come. The Rage Pro has a much more robust set of 3D image-enhancement features than the Rage II, as well as some interesting features, such as true 2X sideband support for AGP and a 4KB texel cache. The proof is in the numbers: In running 3D WinBench's Large Texture test, the beta AGP version of Xpert @ Play's frame rate was 8X that of the PCI version. And while games won't necessarily see that kind of delta running on the AGP version of this part, it shows that AGP can make a very palpable difference.



ATI has joined the VESA-graphics acceleration bandwagon, linking VESA 2.0 features directly to the accelerator, which makes for fast DOS SVGA-graphics performance. Overall,

▸▸▸continued on pg 225



▸▸▸continued from pg 224

the Xpert @ Play looks to be a nice balance of performance and features.

Price: *$229 (4MB, expandable to 8MB); TV Tuner optional.*
Contact: *ATI Corp., (905) 882-2600*
www.atitech.com

ELSA Winner 2000 Office

The original Permedia chip was a mildly interesting, if flawed, 2D/3D accelerator. Chip designer 3D Labs has extensively reworked the Permedia and thrown in the Delta triangle setup engine onto a single chip. The new Permedia 2 chip, now manufactured by Texas Instruments, might be a winner in the race of professional 3D accelerators.

ELSA is a German company long associated with high-performance professional graphics on the PC. However, their new Winner 2000 Office is priced aggressively (for an OpenGL-compliant card), starting at $199 for a 4MB card.



It appears to be quite speedy in Direct3D; we're reserving judgment on 2D Windows until final drivers appear. The only downside seems to be a lack of VESA 2.0 support in hardware.

Price: *$199 (4MB), $299 (8MB)*
Contact: *ELSA, (408) 919-9100*
www.elsa.com



Canopus Pure3D

Take the now-familiar 3Dfx chipset and build a card with 4MB of texture memory to the 2MB frame buffer. That's Canopus' recipe for the Pure 3D. A true 3D add-on card, the Pure 3D allows more textures to be downloaded, which can result in better overall game performance (less pauses to load up textures) or richer images, or both. Canopus is taking an unusual tack, offering no bundled games whatsoever. However, the price is right, at $179 for a 6MB card. Initial performance impressions with stock 3Dfx drivers put this card within shouting range of the Diamond Monster 3D. If you're yearning for a somewhat enhanced 3Dfx add-on card at a reasonable price, the Pure 3D may be just the ticket.



Price: *$179 (2MB frame buffer + 4MB textures)*
Contact: *Canopus Corp., (408) 954-4500*
www.canopuscorp.com

Apocalypse 5Dx

Take one of the hottest 2D chips around—Tseng Labs' ET6100—and pair it with the PowerVR 3Dx chip, and you have the Apocalypse 5Dx. The current Windows 2D performance looks decent, and the SVGA graphics performance is very, very good. The 3D performance looks to be pretty equivalent to the Apocalypse 3Dx. At $199, it bears some watching.

Price: *$199*
Contact: *Videologic, (800) 578 5644*
www.videologic.com

Designing 3D WinBench 97

by Mark L. Van Name and Bill Catchings

Since our debut of 3D WinBench 97 at CGDC earlier this year, it has quickly become the industry standard for evaluating Direct3D performance. The Ziff-Davis Benchmark Operation (ZDBOp), a sister organization to *CGW*, designed 3D WinBench 97 to employ not only scenes like those in current games but also more complex and rich scenes such as those that next year's games will feature.

The benchmark's main score, the 3D WinMark 97, takes into account both performance and capability features. 3D WinBench produces this score by displaying a series of ten scenes that vary in both complexity (900–6,300 triangles drawn per frame) and in the rendering options they employ. In some scenes, the benchmark uses only a minimal set of quality options: point-sampling, perspective correction, and Z-buffering. In other scenes, it applies more demanding quality options, such as bilinear filtering, fog, specular highlighting, and MIP-mapping.

Direct3D drivers may claim to provide a 3D rendering feature but actually not do it correctly or even not do it at all. 3D WinBench 97 provides a way to show how a scene should appear if an accelerator implements the associated feature(s) correctly. If the accelerator renders a scene incorrectly, 3D WinBench 97 will use the Direct3D software emulator rather than the much faster hardware acceleration for that scene.

3D WinBench determines the frame rate for each scene and then takes the average of the 10 individual frame rates and scales it to the score of a baseline machine to produce the 3D WinMark 97. Higher 3D WinMark scores are better than lower scores—but be aware that because the score's calculation includes quality factors, the score is a measure of overall 3D ability rather than simply a frames-per-second performance metric.

3D WinBench 97 also provides many other tools for exploring 3D performance. You can look at the frame rates for individual scenes or check triangle or fill rates to validate vendor claims. To aid in testing AGP, ZDBOp recently made available a scene with more than 5MB of textures (see AGP sidebar). You can download this scene, as well as the rest of 3D WinBench 97, from **www.zdbop.com**.

Mark L. Van Name is VP, Product Testing for Ziff-Davis Inc. Bill Catchings is Director of Ziff-Davis' Benchmark Operation, ZD's research and development division, which produces the company's benchmark products.





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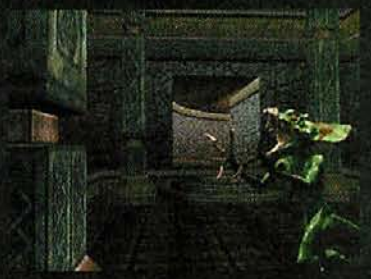
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On the Horizon

These products aren't even near shipping, but look very interesting nonetheless.

Diamond Stealth II Model S220

This is a real surprise from Diamond, and a potential sleeper hit. They have taken a Rendition Vérité V2100 (a cost-reduced version of the V2200), mated it with 4MB of high-speed SDRAM, and are pricing it at a mere $99. The Stealth II has the potential of redefining the low-end of the market.

Matrox m3D

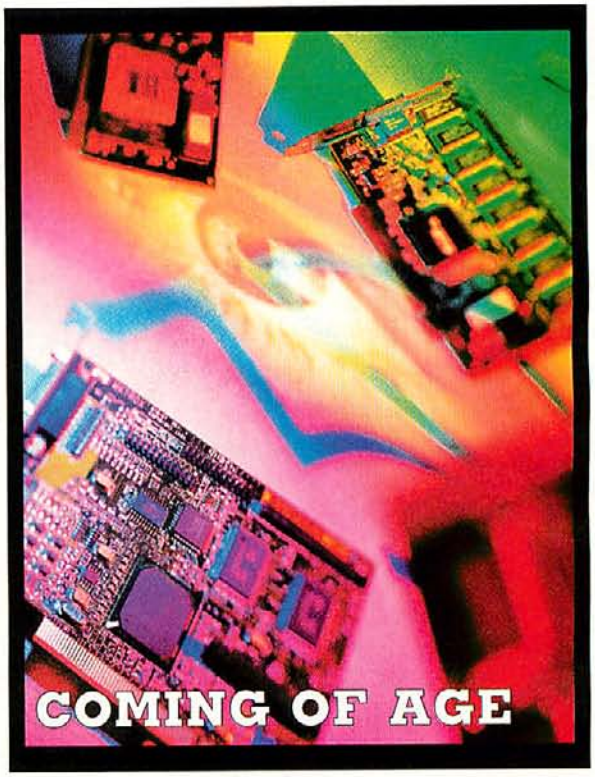
In a departure from their usual in-house chips, Matrox has tapped an outside company for a dedicated 3D-accelerator, choosing NEC's PowerVR chip. Matrox is confident that they can work out all the Direct3D driver issues with the PowerVR, and it gives them entree into the burgeoning PowerVR title library. This board will be aggressively priced, coming in under $100.

Oak Technology Warp 5

The Warp 5 uses a chunk-based rendering engine somewhat akin to the PowerVR. It performs automatic full-screen edge anti-aliasing and trilinear texture filtering, which results in amazingly sharp images, even at relatively low resolution. Look for products based on the Warp 5 early next year.

TriTech Pyramid 3D

Claiming to have the "first 3D accelerator for DirectX 6," TriTech says that the Pyramid 3D has a host of advanced features, including bump mapping and radiosity lighting. Slated to ship at the end of '97, there are currently no official announcements regarding board-level products. While the specs look pretty good, the proof will be in the frame rate.



To Sum It All Up

The graphics hardware landscape has been radically altered. S3 is essentially sitting this round out while they regroup, while Matrox has opted to go outside of the company for their 3D acceleration needs. NVIDIA, after the relative failure of the NV1, has come out of the wilderness with the stunning RIVA 128. After last year's big splash, 3Dfx continues its course, with Voodoo Rush seeming to be the mainstay for now. Rendition has returned with the V2200, 3D Labs has a fast new chip, and even ATI is shipping a fast card. The choices are much more difficult this year.

> **"The choices are much more difficult this year."**

Still, when all the chips are on the table, the Diamond Viper 330 is the clear performance winner, and it gets our CG Choice, while the STB Velocity 128 comes in a close second. Another interesting runner-up is the Stingray 128 3D/TV, with its 8MB of RAM and 3Dfx image quality. Even so, some imminent products—like the ELSA Permedia 2 board, the Thriller 3D, and the ATI card—seem interesting, although performance is still an open question in all these cases.

Along with the new product landscape comes new choices—and difficult ones at that. But the 3D performance bottleneck is finally starting to open up, and with the coming 3D titles like Jedi Knight, Turok, and a host of EA sports titles, computer gaming will never be the same.

CG ON-LINE Text of this story and pictures are online at www.gamespot.com.

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ect & Conquer

by Denny Atkin

A Beginner's Guide to Cyberspace Gaming

You've been wanting to go online and get immersed in gaming, but you're discouraged by what you hear: Some people consider the online-gaming market to be a real mess. Initial growth predictions about online gaming seem to have been wildly optimistic. Getting games up and running can still be a major hassle. And it seems that just when the online-gaming services find ways to address latency delays, the Internet gets more bogged down from steadily increasing traffic. Even the games that claim to be point-and-click and ready out of the box for Net play often require you to learn about esoterica such as IP addresses. Last year, the pundits jumped on the bandwagon and proclaimed online gaming to be the future; this year they're ready to pronounce the genre stillborn.

Despite all these issues, don't stick to solo gaming and using your modem just to read email and browse Uma Thurman Web pages. It's true that online gaming is still a nascent science—that you're more likely than not to hit a few roadblocks as you play—but the effort is worth it. Real human opponents offer an unpredictable playing style that even the best artificial-intelligence foes can't match. And while you feel a sense of accomplishment when you send a computer opponent into retreat, it can't match the sheer exhilaration of defeating a human foe. As for ease of use, we're seeing almost daily progress in making connecting to online games a smoother process.

Seeing the Sites

Because so many online-game sites offer play free of charge—requiring only that you have an Internet account and perhaps the boxed copy of the game you wish to play—the most perplexing dilemma isn't whether to try online gaming, but rather where to start. No matter what genre of game you're interested in—real-time strategy, simulation, role-playing, sports, or even puzzles and adventures—you'll find more than enough outlets for your gaming Jones on the Net.

Just as there are many genres of games available for online play, so are there numerous types of gaming services. Various Internet-based services offer pay-by-the-hour, monthly fee, and free games, or a combination thereof. Stand-alone online games also offer a variety of pricing options and are frequently free of charge during their test phases. And of course, online services (remember those?) such as AOL and CompuServe offer a number of games, usually for an hourly fee. Finally, many off-the-shelf games now include free online play, while others can be modified for online play through the use of third-party utilities such as Kali.

On the following pages, you'll find a road map to guide you through the maze of online-gaming options.

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Genesis

Multiplayer online games aren't the new phenomenon some people make them out to be. In 1979, my classmates and I often played an all-text, coordinate-based, multiplayer SPACE WAR game against students from rival high schools. This experience seemed every bit as exciting as today's QUAKE frag-fests, despite the fact that only some of us had 300-baud modems—the rest were using 110-baud connections.

Online gaming got its real start, however, on the classic online services. Long before the masses jumped on the information superhighway hype and turned the Internet into the monster it is today, CompuServe, GEnie, and a number of now-defunct services hosted online games that ranged from space-trading simulations to role-playing games. These were almost exclusively text-based, but a small cadre of gamers flocked to them, despite the primitive interfaces and the hourly charges of $12 or more. The social aspects made these early experiences worth the price.

Gamers could find free alternatives on local bulletin board services. (In case you joined the party after the Internet took hold, BBSes are local nets run on personal computers using dial-up modems. Kids today, sheesh.) TRADEWARS and other popular BBS-based online games were almost exclusively turn-based, in part because many smaller BBSes supported only one user at a time. BBS systems still exist—some even host games—but by and large they're used by folks who have been active since pre-Internet days.



NET FORCE Many boxed games, such as X-WING VS. TIE FIGHTER, can be played for free over the Net using services such as the Internet Gaming Zone.

The advent of the graphical front-end widened the appeal of online gaming—albeit only to a bigger niche market. One of the first popular graphical online games was Kesmai's AIR WARRIOR, an online flight sim that got its start with a Macintosh release on GEnie. Amiga and Atari ST versions came soon after, followed finally by a release for MS-DOS computers. Even when AIR WARRIOR was new, the graphics were fairly primitive, but hundreds of gamers quickly became addicted to the air-combat arena in which every kill was personal. (Many went cold turkey after getting their first $300+ monthly phone bill, which is why many old-timers chuckle when they hear complaints about monthly fees of $19.95 for some of today's services.)

But it took the explosion of the Internet back in 1994 to launch online gaming to prominence. Game producers looked at the combination of flat-rate online access and the flood of gamers coming online and realized there was money in them there phone wires. Those companies are still trying to figure out the best way to mine for dollars, but that hasn't stopped online gaming from popping up everywhere, with prices ranging from $2 an hour to the ever-popular *free*.



MATURITY RULEZ DOOD Online-gaming services can enable you to find other players whose interests match yours; unfortunately, many game areas are dominated by immature teen talk.

Where, When, How?

If you're on the Net and you do anything more than email, it's hard to avoid online games. You'll find them on online services, you'll find links to them on gaming sites, and you'll even find games of sorts on corporate Web pages, ranging from ESPN to Longines watches.

But until recently, believe it or not, you'd have found the vast majority of online gamers on

TEN president and CEO Jack Heistand says that approximately 40 percent of his service's users choose the hourly rate, despite the availability of a flat-fee rate.

America Online, not on the Internet. When AOL first introduced its flat-rate structure, the online games it offered mushroomed. Hundreds of people could be found each evening playing everything from POKER to AIR WARRIOR, all for a flat fee. Industry scuttlebutt has it, however, that AOL contractually had to pay a royalty to companies that created those games for every hour that gamers spent in those areas. So it's not surprising that in July AOL changed its policy to incorporate a $1.99-an-hour surcharge for online games offered through its Worldplay service. At the same time, many of the game providers chose to move off AOL. Games such as GEMSTONE 3 can still be played by AOL members, but when subscribers choose the game they're actually sent to the game company's Web site.

CompuServe still offers online games as well. Because the service has maintained an hourly fee, its games have never seen the sheer numbers of simultaneous players that AOL's did. Still, the service does feature a variety of games, including the classic MEGAWARS, one of the original online service–based multiplayer games. Check it out with some friends if you want proof that a simple ASCII-based game can be fun. Prodigy's game offerings are pretty much limited to card games, and as GEnie has fallen into obscurity, most of its game providers—and game players—have moved on to new environs.

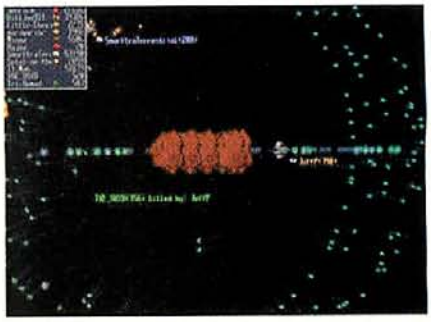
As old-timers move off the online services and new gamers join the fold, specialized Internet-based gaming services such as TEN and Mplayer have popped up to try to attract their business. These World Wide Web–based services provide matchmaking services for playing a variety of commercial, off-the-shelf games online; many also feature original, online-only offerings. In addition, some use custom technology to try to eliminate the gameplay glitches caused by transmitting data over the Internet. You'll find all sorts of pricing on these services. Some charge a flat monthly fee, some an hourly fee, and some let you play for free at a basic level and charge you for tournaments and other bonuses. Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone offers a variety of free games as well as exclusive pay-to-play, online-only games.

You'll also find more than a few stand-alone online multiplayer games, usually on Web pages hosted by their developers. These are almost exclusively pay-to-play, though there are a few advertising-supported exceptions, such as Berkeley's YOU DON'T KNOW JACK: THE NETSHOW. Some, such as Sony's TANARUS and Virgin's SUBSPACE, have been free of charge in their beta-testing phases while developers fine-tune the games and incorporate user suggestions.

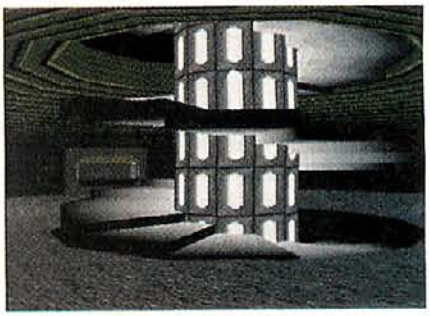
Many of today's games support multiplayer Internet play right out of the box. Some, such as EF2000 2.0 and FALCON 4.0, require gamers to be members of a service like TEN to play online. Others, such as INTERSTATE '76, DIABLO, and RED ALERT, let you find other players by connecting through a free server sponsored by the company. A new breed of games should start appearing this fall—FLYING NIGHTMARES 2, for example—that will automatically search for other players on the Internet without requiring you to connect to a host server.



NEW MODELS WARSPORT, an original game offered for free on Mplayer, is unique in that it's completely advertising-supported, and user suggestions are guiding its feature set during its open beta test.



DEATH BY FIRE Virgin's SUBSPACE was available free of charge for about a year while it was being tested; now the price is $10 a month.



NO EGA HERE The days of online games being simpler than their boxed competitors are over; witness PHOENIX ARMADA, an RPG set in outer space with full 3D support.

There are utilities available—Kali, Kahn, and services provided by Internet Gaming Zone, Mplayer, and HEAT.NET—that will let you play a number of games designed for local area networks via the Internet. Gamers sometimes use these to play games like EF2000 2.0—which only supports direct-modem connections and play on TEN—across the Internet.

Finally, if you enjoy the office football pool and similar group games, you'll find a number of rotisserie-style games on the Internet. These range from ESPN's traditional fantasy football leagues to E! Online's peculiar, but entertaining, STUDIO BOSS, in which you trade Hollywood players, not athletes.

Now How Much Would You Pay?

Online gaming has spawned nearly as many price structures as there are kinds of places to

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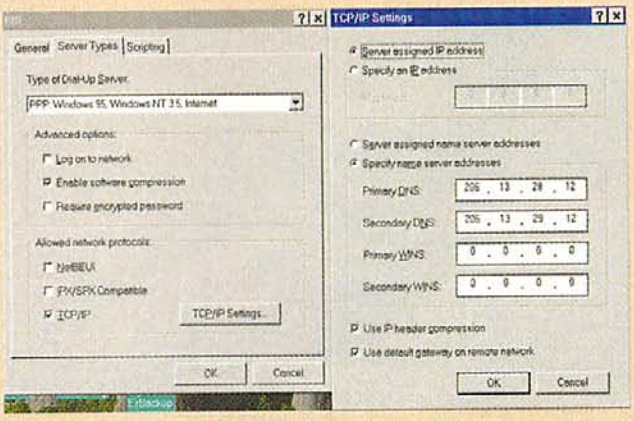
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Getting Connected

A Step-By-Step Approach to Going Online

by Loyd Case

Getting connected to the Internet can sometimes feel like the computer equivalent of trying to navigate the maze in the original ZORK game—"You are in maze with twisty little passages, none of which are alike." Just bear in mind that once you get connected that first time, it's a snap from then on. With a little perseverance, you can be a double-click away from a world of gaming. Getting to that first time, though, can seem like Xenophon's march to the sea.



INTO THE GUTS Windows 95's dial-up networking setup looks intimidating, but your ISP should provide you with all the numbers you'll need to plug in.

What You Need

Before you plunge into the Internet gaming fray, you'll need a few essentials. The first is a good modem. Whatever you do, don't skimp on your modem. Cheap modems often fare poorly on many phone lines, resulting in overall slower speeds and lost data. In terms of gameplay, this means that the game can get "out of sync." When some games get out of sync, they may simply quit; other games may exhibit strange behavior, like being able to aim and shoot, but not hit anything. The bottom line: Get a good modem.

There's been a lot of hype about modem speeds. Modem speed is measured in "baud rate," an arcane measurement first used to measure the speed of teletype machines. Baud rate can pretty much be equated to bits per second, with 8 bits equaling one byte. At the very least, get a good 33.6-Kbps (kilobits per second) modem. Be wary of the newer 56-Kb modems, as there are competing standards at this speed. In other words, some 56-Kbaud modems may not be able to connect to others at 56 Kbaud. However, you'll always be able to connect at 33.6 Kbaud or slower, because all of the 56-Kb modems support the older standards.

You can connect to the Internet by other methods, depending on what part of the country you live in and your amount of disposable income. These alternate methods include ISDN and cable modems. Check with your phone company and cable TV company to see if these options exist in your area and what they cost.

Service Providers

A home computer connects to the Internet through an *Internet Service Provider* (ISP for short), and that's your next essential. Picking the right service provider is critical for Internet gaming. The reason for this is network *latency*. Data travels the Internet in a series of small packets—and no two packets have to take the same route. The more servers a data packet passes through, the longer it takes to get from one point to the other. Latency is a measure of the amount of time packets take to get from your computer to the game server and back. The problem is, many games can't handle latencies in excess of 100 milliseconds—most require shorter times.

The key to shortening your latency is to find an ISP that connects directly to one of the high-speed telecommunications backbones. In telecom parlance, a backbone is one of the major data communications superhighways that ties smaller networks together. Just because an ISP is big doesn't always mean that its latencies are short, so check carefully. It's relatively easy to switch ISPs, but that often means your email address will change, too.

Software Necessities

Now that you've got your modem and have picked your ISP, it's time to configure Windows 95 to connect. I assume you're using Windows 95, because most of the newest, coolest multiplayer games use it. You'll need three pieces of software to get connected: a dial-up adapter, TCP/IP networking software, and a browser.

The first item is a *dial-up adapter*. Add the dial-up adapter to your system through the network control panel applet, which exists in your Windows 95 control panel (see figure 1). The dial-up adapter makes your modem look like a network interface card to your TCP/IP software.

Just because an ISP is big doesn't always mean that its latencies are short, so check carefully.

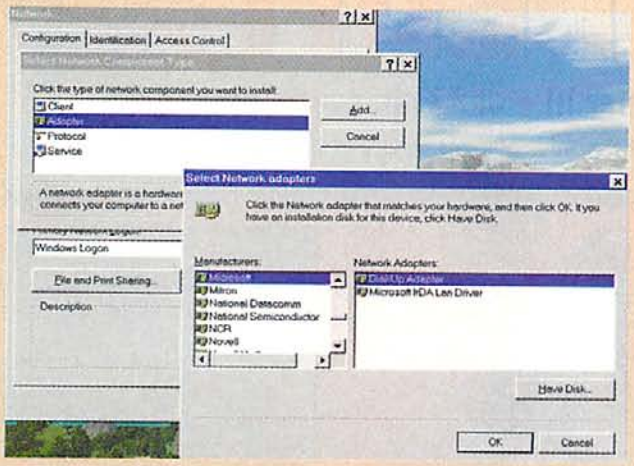


FIGURE 1 Windows 95's dial-up networking essentially makes your PC think that your ISP is connected by a virtual network card.

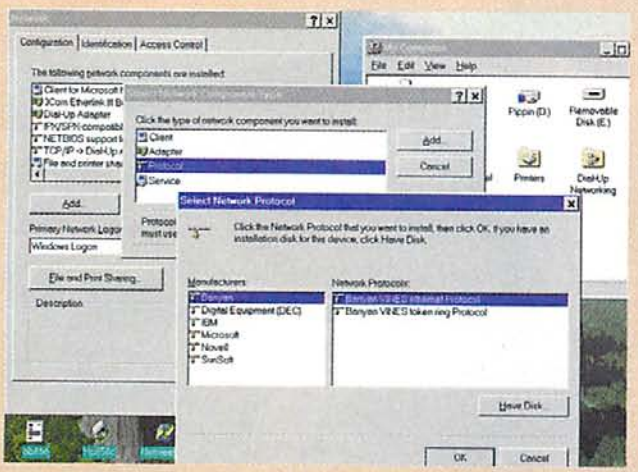


FIGURE 2 You'll need to make sure that the Microsoft TCP/IP protocol is set-configured for your dial-up networking connection.

The second item, your TCP/IP software, is the Rosetta stone that enables disparate computers to communicate.

Windows 95 comes with its own TCP/IP software. You use the Windows 95 control panel to configure TCP/IP (see figure 2). There are a host of arcane configuration options that need to be set up. Your service provider will usually supply you with all the settings for its servers. Many service providers have automated the setup process—all you need to do is run their install utility and all the necessary parameters are automatically configured. Even if there isn't a setup utility, your ISP will supply you with instructions on setting up your TCP/IP software. There are really only a handful of important parameters: the IP addresses of your ISP's servers, the *domain name* (such as pacbell.net or dnai.com), your account name, and your password. If you plan on using email and Internet news feeds, you'll also need the names of the mail and news servers—those are usually just mail.*domainname* and news.*domainname*.

Finally, you'll need a Web browser to gain initial access to many of the gaming sites on the Net. Unless you've been living in a cave on a desert island, you already know that the two leading Web browsers are Netscape's Navigator and Microsoft's Internet Explorer. Both are good for accessing most Internet gaming sites. Your ISP will supply you with one or the other.

Other Cool Stuff

If you get heavily involved in multiplayer gaming—and the temptation to play other people (rather than the sterile AI in most games) is enormous—there are some other useful items that will make life easier. One of the nicest items to have is a second phone line that's dedicated to your modem. If you don't, your friends might wonder what's up with the constant busy signal. A second phone line enables you to still have a life.

Windows 95 comes with a very useful tool, WINIPCFG. Most ISPs assign your computer's IP address dynamically—it changes from one session to the next. You may need to know your own IP address if you're hosting a Kali game session. WINIPCFG shows you your current IP address.

What Are You Waiting For?

There's a whole world of gamers on the Net playing each other, playing on teams, and even wandering around huge, role-playing realms. But to get in the game, you have to get connected.

See you on the Net.

play the games. The original model was the hourly rate. Although AOL's new WorldPlay service just reverted to an hourly fee, most providers who started with this model have moved on to other pricing plans—or at least offer them as options. Surprisingly, though, hourly fees appeal to some gamers. TEN president and CEO Jack Heistand says that approximately 40 percent of his service's users choose the hourly rate, despite the availability of a flat-fee rate.

Many people think flat subscription fees are the way to go, since it simplifies the billing and takes the "clock is ticking" pressure off gamers while they play. It's like paying your cable bill: The rate is the same no matter how much you use the service. Even here, prices vary quite a bit. At press time, TEN charged $19.95 a month for unlimited time, while Mplayer's fee for its Mplayer Plus service is $29.95 for an entire year.

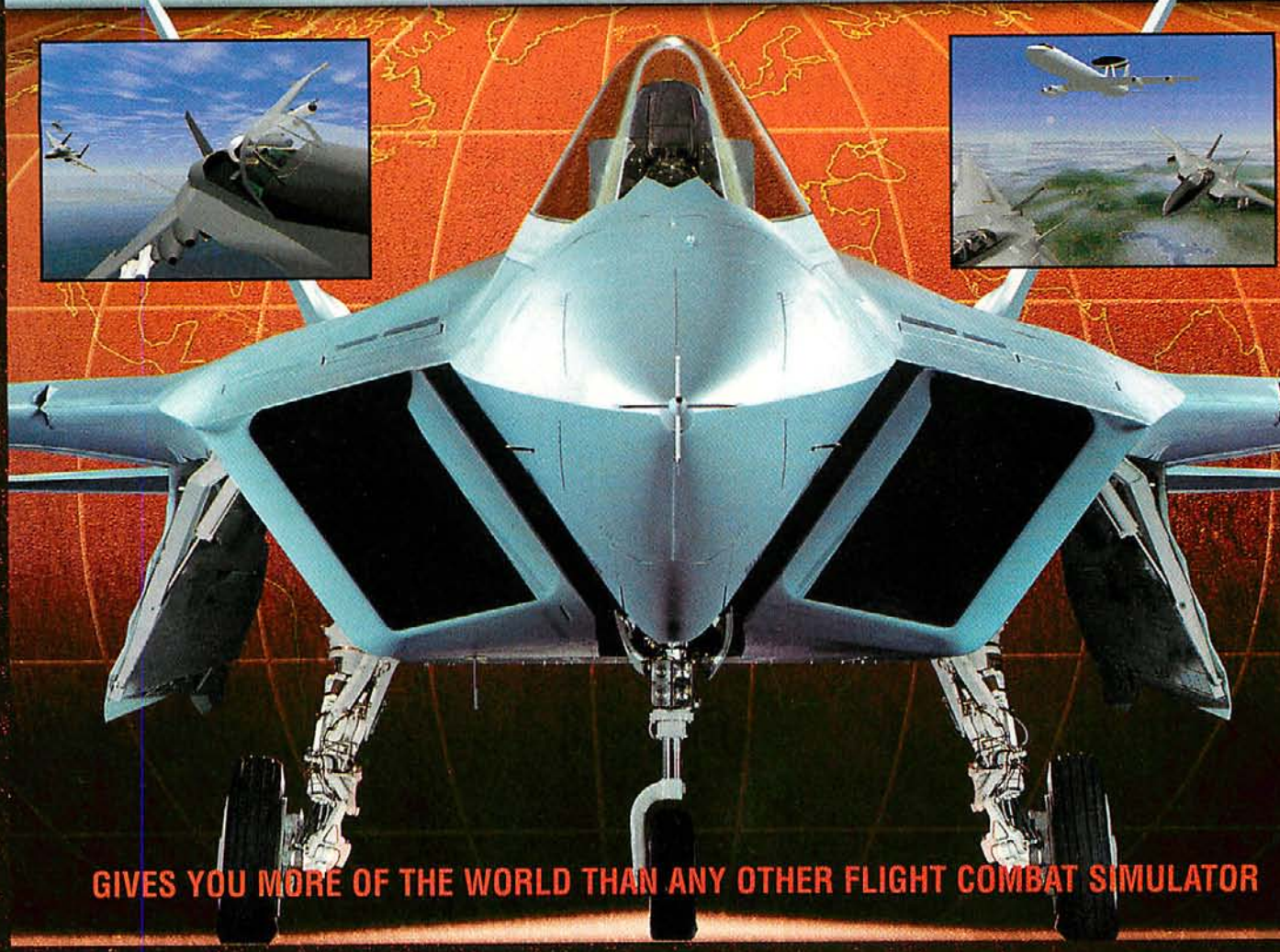
A new model, which a number of services may soon adopt, is "session pricing." You'll purchase a "ticket" to play the game, which may be good for one play session or for a 24-hour period. The Internet Gaming Zone is expected to offer gamers a choice of session or monthly prices when it introduces its premium games.

Of course, the most popular price is no price at all, and you would be surprised how many games you can play for only the cost of Internet access. Many boxed games support free play out of the box, complete with access to no-charge matchmaking servers. Among the best-known are Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone, which hosts games from Microsoft, Hasbro, LucasArts, and others; Blizzard's battle.net; Westwood's Westwood

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #107



BONUS STUFF Ubi-Soft's Pod offers much to connected players—not only does it include free Internet matchmaking capabilities, but you can also download new cars and tracks.

Chat; and SIGS, the Sierra Internet Gaming System.

Most of these services derive their revenue from the sales of boxed games. But there are also free services that don't require you to buy a thing. Mplayer, originally launched as a pay-to-play service, now offers advertising-supported free play of a number of games. Berkeley Systems' You Don't Know Jack: The Netshow and a number of other games slated to appear on its Bezerk Web site are free downloads, paid for by unobtrusive commercials called "interstitials."

There are also a few companies that are getting creative in the financing department. Genetic Anomalies' Chron-X, for instance, can be downloaded and played free of charge. However, it's a collectible card-based game, and if you become a regular player, you'll probably want some expansion packs for your deck. Those *aren't* free.

Logging On

Once you've decided where you want to go, the final question is how to get there. You'll need an account with an Internet Service Provider (ISP) to get connected. Some services, such as TEN and Mplayer, offer ISP service as an extra-cost option, but you can use virtually any ISP to connect to almost all gaming sites. Some national ISPs, such as Earthlink and Concentric, offer their users online games from companies like Kesmai and MPG-Net.

You should do a little research, since not all ISPs are created equal. Unless you're playing turn-based games, for instance, don't plan on using America Online or CompuServe for your Internet access. While they're compatible with most Internet games, they send information across the Internet too slowly for action games, simulations, and other real-time endeavors. For more tips on getting connected to the Net, see Loyd Case's sidebar, "Getting Connected."

Finally, there's the question of hardware. While technologies currently in the works—ISDN, ADSL, cable modems, and satellite communications—promise to offer richer online-gaming experiences in the future, most of us are currently limited to using old-fashioned modems communicating over ancient copper wires. Today's minimal online-gaming rig is a Pentium 75 with 16MB of RAM, Windows 95, a 28.8-Kbps modem, and both Internet Explorer and Netscape.

The pages that follow highlight the major online-gaming options, from matchmaking services to online-gaming utilities. With new sites popping up every week and an impressive number of boxed games now supporting Internet play, it's impossible for any list to be comprehensive, but you're bound to find something that connects with your gaming desires.



Places To Go, People

Take a Tour of More Than 40 Hot Gaming Sites

Gaming Networks

Internet Gaming Zone

Summary Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone has quickly grown to become one of the most popular online gaming destinations on the Web. With nearly 20 games available for play free of charge, it's not surprising. The Zone supports multiplayer play for a number of boxed, off-the-shelf games from Microsoft, LucasArts, and Hasbro; we expect other partners to join the fold as well. There are also a number of free parlor and board games. ZoneLAN, the service's free IPX emulator, works in a manner similar to Kali to allow you to play some networkable MS-DOS games over the Internet.


INTERNET GAMING ZONE

In coming months Microsoft is slated to add premium games to the service, including ASHERON'S CALL, a first-person RPG, and FIGHTER ACE, a World War II flight simulator. Microsoft reportedly will offer both session-based and monthly flat rates for these games.

Free Games Offered BACKGAMMON, BRIDGE, CHECKERS, CHESS, GO, HEARTS, HELLBENDER (trial version), MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS (trial version), OUTLAWS (demo), REVERSI, SPADES, X-WING VS. TIE FIGHTER (demo)

Free Games (must own boxed game) CLOSE COMBAT, HELLBENDER, MICROSOFT GOLF 3.0, MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS, OUTLAWS, SCRABBLE, X-WING VS. TIE FIGHTER

Upcoming Games Premium: ASHERON'S CALL, FIGHTER ACE

Upcoming Free Games (must own boxed game) AGE OF EMPIRES, BASEBALL 3D, BATTLESHIP, CLOSE COMBAT: A BRIDGE TOO FAR, FLIGHT SIMULATOR 98, REBELLION, RISK

Price Structure Free play for commercial boxed and classic games. Pricing not yet announced for premium games; by-day and by-month plans will be available.

URL: www.zone.com

Mplayer

Summary Mplayer is currently the second largest online gaming service, thanks in no small part to its ever-popular pricing plan: You can play about 20 games free of charge. In addition, the service offers Mplayer Plus membership, which opens up a number of other games, as well as access to exclusive tournaments.

Mplayer's Multi-Client Application Protocol and technology plus tight integration with PSInet's backbone keep latency to a minimum. Our testing showed very good performance at times, but there were also sessions with major latency delays. There are some other technology bonuses, including speech that's integrated not only with the service's front-end, but also with many of the games.



MPLAYER

Free Games Offered BIG RED RACING (demo), BLOOD (demo), CRUSH DELUXE, HEARTS, PANZER GENERAL, QUAKE (demo), SCARAB (demo), TERMINAL VELOCITY

Free Games (must own boxed game) BATTLESHIP, BIG RED RACING, BLOOD, MECHWARRIOR 2, QUAKE, RISK, SCARAB, SCRABBLE, WAR WIND, WARLORDS III, WARSPORT

Mplayer Plus COMMAND & CONQUER, C&C: RED ALERT, DEADLOCK, DIABLO, WARCRAFT

Upcoming Games 688(I) HUNTER/KILLER, @RANGE, ABC MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL, ABC INDY RACING, ATF GOLD, BATTLESPIRE, CHASM, DOMINION, EXTREME ASSAULT, IM1A2 ABRAMS, LINKS LS, MACHINE HUNTER, OUTLAW RACERS, TAKE NO PRISONERS.

Price Structure Free play for standard Mplayer games; MPlayer Plus membership is $29.95 a year.

URL: www.mplayer.com

TEN

Summary Another high-profile gaming network, TEN (Total Entertainment Network) hasn't grown as much as some of its competitors due to its lack of free play. However, TEN offers you bang for the buck. Its Bullet and DART compression technologies work well to reduce latency-related jumpiness, while the slightly corny "Mr. Bandwidth" simplifies finding players with whom you can get a speedy connection.

TEN considers community to be a large part of its appeal, so in addition to the tournaments it runs, look for prizes of up to $10,000 for hot players when TEN launches its Professional Gamers League this fall.



TEN

To Defeat

Online Networks & ISPs

America Online

Summary If you're looking for an online experience that's easy to access, it doesn't get much simpler than AOL. Any additional software needed for a game is obtained automatically by the AOL front-end software, so this is the place for the download-phobic. Before AOL instituted its hourly fee, many games would fill up nightly; now they're much less crowded, but you won't have trouble finding opponents. There are some good games here provided by Engage Games Online and through links to GameStorm, but games very similar to AOL's WorldPlay premium card and board games can be played free of charge on services such as the Internet Gaming Zone.


AMERICA ONLINE

Games Offered Premium: Air Warrior, Backgammon, Bridge, Casino Poker, Castles II, Classic Card Games, Cribbage, Dragon's Gate, Federation, Gin, Harpoon Online, Hearts, Hundred Years War, Legends of Kesmai, Rolemaster: Magestorm, Spades, Splatterball, Virtual Pool, Whist

Free Games Offered Meta-Squares, NTN Studio Games, Out of Order, Puzzle Zone, Slingo, Strike a Match 2, Trivial Pursuit Interactive (these games are covered by AOL's flat-rate access fee)

Upcoming Games WarCraft II (via Engage)

Price Structure $1.99 an hour for premium games; other games covered by AOL's $19.95-a-month flat rate.

URL: www.aol.com

CompuServe

Summary CompuServe has some entertaining online games, but they're far from state-of-the-art. There are plenty of puzzle and trivia games, as well as a number of old, but still entertaining, strategy games. The hourly fees may appeal to current CompuServe members who play only a few hours each month.

Games Offered Air Traffic Controller, Air Warrior II, British Legends, Casino Blackjack, Casino Poker, Catchword, Classic Cards, Gemstone III, Harpoon Online, Island of Kesmai, Legends of Kesmai, MegaWars I, MegaWars III, Multiplayer BattleTech: Solaris, NTN Trivia, Out of Order, Sniper!, Strike a Match, WordLand, You Guessed It, Yoyodyne Entertainment

Upcoming Games CompuServe will be adding games from Engage in coming months.

Price Structure Standard CompuServe fees apply ($9.95 a month for five hours, 2.95 for each additional hour; or $24.95 a month for 20 hours, $1.95 for each additional hour).

URL: www.compuserve.com



COMPUSERVE

Earthlink/ The Arena

Summary Earthlink's Arena consolidates a number of other gaming services under a single billing umbrella.

Games Offered Lineups from GameStorm (Aries Online Games/Kesmai) and Engage



EARTHLINK/THE ARENA

Upcoming Games OceanLine, WorldPlay, Simutronics, TEN, 2AM, On-Line PLC, MPG-Net, PassPort2, and I-Magic Online are all slated to be available through The Arena.

Price Structure $1.75 an hour. Earthlink members receive free monthly Earthlink access (normally $19.95) if they play 35 or more hours a month.

URL: www.earthlink.net/thearena

Concentric/ GameGateway

Summary Like Earthlink's Arena, Concentric's GameGateway offers games from a variety of gaming services, all accessible from a single location and consolidated on a single monthly bill. GameGateway is affiliated with Unified Gamers Online, which provides easy links to a number of game-related Web sites.

Games Offered Lineups from Engage, GameStorm, OceanLine, and On-Line

Price Structure $1.75 an hour.

URL: www.gamegateway.com

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Games Offered AD&D Dark Sun, Blood, Command & Conquer, C&C: Red Alert, Deadlock, Diablo, Duke Nukem 3D, EF2000 2.0, Master of Orion II, Panzer General, Quake, Shadow Warrior, WarCraft
Upcoming Games Confirmed Kill, Falcon 4.0, Myth, NASCAR Racing Online Series, Twilight Lands, Wolfram, Zero
Price Structure Flat rate: $19.95 a month; TEN VIP club offers $39.90 for three months. Hourly: $9.95 a month for 5 hours, $1.95 for each additional hour.
URL: www.ten.net

HEAT.NET

Summary SegaSoft's HEAT.NET seems poised to make a big splash in the online world. The service features a number of exclusive games, including entries in the under-represented 3D action and fighting-game genres. The system also features IPX network emulation, which means you can play most network-compatible multiplayer games over HEAT.NET—WarCraft II and similar games are thus HEAT.NET-compatible despite their "exclusive" status on other networks.

HEAT.NET's tournaments and ladders can potentially get you a lot more than a ranking on a scoreboard. Premium members can amass "Degrees" (frequent player points) and use them to purchase things such as games and Virgin music items from HEAT.NET's Black Market store. In addition, HEAT.NET's games will feature LEDOs—Limited Edition Digital Objects—such as power-ups, weapons, special powers, and so on. These counterfeit-proof additions can be bought, sold, and traded with other HEAT.NET players.



Games Offered Alien Race, Death Drome, Flesh Feast, HEAT Warz, Net Fighter, Ragged Earth, Scud: The Industrial Evolution
Upcoming Games 10SIX, Skies, Vigilance
Price Structure A HEAT.NET membership can be purchased at retail stores. The box will include HEAT.NET software; four HEAT.NET exclusive games (Scud, NetFighter, Death Drome, Alien Race); shareware versions of Blood, Lords of the Realm 2, Interstate '76, Uprising, and Postal; a Virgin music sampler; a T-shirt; antivirus software; a month's free ISP service; and six months' Premium HEAT.NET membership, for $29.95. Perimeter membership: Free, no access to tournaments or Degrees. Premium membership: $5.95 a month or $49.99 a year.
URL: www.heat.net

MPG-Net

Summary MPG-Net is a seasoned hand in the online-gaming universe, having been launched back in the dark ages of 1991. Today's MPG-Net is Internet-based, but it takes a different approach from most other services. Instead of featuring multiplayer versions of off-the-shelf commercial games, MPG-Net features its own multiplayer games custom-designed from the ground up for online play. The current crop will appeal primarily to strategy and

Company-Sponsored Matchmaking Services

A number of software companies have launched matchmaking services for their online games. With the exception of online-only titles such as NetStorm and Sole Survivor, nearly all of these can be played free of charge. What follows are some of the most popular.

battle.net

Company Blizzard
Games Offered Diablo
Upcoming Games StarCraft
URL: www.battle.net



BATTLE.NET

Westwood Chat

Company Westwood
Games Offered C&C: Red Alert, Monopoly
Upcoming Games Command & Conquer: Sole Survivor
URL: www.westwood.com

Activision

Company Activision
Games Offered Interstate '76, MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries
Upcoming Games Dark Reign, Heavy Gear, NetStorm
URL: www.activision.com

Bezerk

Company Berkeley Systems



BEZERK

Games Offered Acrophobia, You Don't Know Jack: The Netshow
URL: www.bezerk.com

Sierra Internet Gaming System (SIGS)

Company Sierra On-Line
Games Offered 3D Ultra Mini Golf, Birthright, FPS: Football '97, FPS: Golf, Hoyle Blackjack, Hoyle Casino, Hoyle Poker, Lords of the Realm 2 Siege Pack, Mission Force: Cyberstorm, Outpost 2, Power Chess, Shivers 2, The Time Warp of Dr. Brain, Trophy Bass II



SIGS

Upcoming Games Cyberstorm 2: Corp Wars, FPS: Football Pro '98, Lords of Magic, Red Baron II, SWAT 2, Trophy Rivers
URL: smc.sierra.com

POD Game Service

Company Ubi-Soft
Games Offered POD
URL: www.ubi-soft.com/pod/ENGLISH/usa.html

role-playing fans; 3D action games are in the works, however. Among the service's games are EMPIRE BUILDER, a sort of multiplayer RAILROAD TYCOON based on the Mayfair railroad game; KINGDOM OF DRAKKAR, an RPG (frustrated DIABLO and ULTIMA ONLINE veterans take note—player killing is forbidden here); and IMPERIUM, a space strategy and resource-management game. MPG-Net also features an IPX simulator for playing a variety of network-capable boxed games on the service.

Games Offered BACKGAMMON, EMPIRE BUILDER, IMPERIUM, JUNTA, KINGDOM OF DRAKKAR, MINION HUNTER, OPERATION MARKET-GARDEN


MPG-NET

Upcoming Games BRIDGE; CHECKERS; CHESS; DRAGONGARD; DRAKKAR II; EMPIRES DAWN; FIEFQUEST; JUDGEMENT PHOENIX; SEARCH AND DESTROY; SKULLS, BONES, AND BUCCANEERS; WARLORDS OF THE APOCALYPSE

Price Structure $9.95 a month.

URL: www.mpgn.com

Engage Games Online

Summary Engage is both an Internet-accessible gaming service as well as a provider of games to online services such as America Online. Whether you access an Engage game from your local ISP or through a service such as AOL or GameGateway, you'll pay an hourly fee. To make the service appealing, Engage has secured exclusives on a number of games;


ENGAGE

of their current and planned lineups, only DIABLO isn't an exclusive. To further differentiate itself, Engage is developing online entertainment products with companies such as Billboard, Caesar's Palace, and The Improvisation.

Games Offered BILLBOARD LIVE! MUSIC TRIVIA, CASTLES II: SIEGE AND CONQUEST, DARKNESS FALLS, DESCENT ONLINE, THE IMPROV, REDNECK RAMPAGE, ROLEMASTER: MAGESTORM, ROLEMASTER: THE BLADELANDS, SPLATTERBALL, VIRTUAL POOL, WARCRAFT II: TIDES OF DARKNESS

Upcoming Games BLOOD, CAESAR'S CASINO, DIABLO, DRAGON DICE, HUMAN BEANS, TELE-ARENA, US CHESS FEDERATION

Price Structure $1.95 an hour.

URL: www.gamesonline.com

GameStorm

Summary You know them as Kesmai, or perhaps as Aries Online Games. The developer of games such as AIR WARRIOR and MULTIPLAYER BATTLETECH: SOLARIS for online services such as GEnie, the company has now launched its own stand-alone gaming service under the moniker GameStorm. Many of the games are offered both directly through GameStorm as well as through various online services. The upcoming first-person shooter ALIENS ONLINE gives you your shot at joining the Space Marines. Or you can start as a face-hugger and work your way up to Queen. This has the potential to be a big online hit this fall.

Games Offered AIR WARRIOR II, CASINO BLACKJACK, CASINO POKER, CATCHWORD, CLASSIC CARD GAMES, HARPOON ONLINE, LEGENDS OF KESMAI, MULTIPLAYER BATTLETECH: SOLARIS

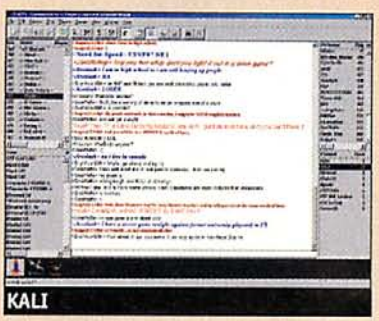
Online Utilities

Kali

Summary Kali is the most popular IPX emulator for multiplayer gaming. This program lets you play most games designed for LAN play over the Internet; only a few speed-sensitive games such as F-22 LIGHTNING 2 don't work well with it. Kali also has a chat interface that gamers can use to find opponents. With more than 2,000 players active on various Kali servers, even on weeknights, it's more popular than many Internet gaming services.

Price $20; trial version allows 15 minutes per game.

URL: www.kali.net


KALI

Kahn

Summary Like Kali, Kahn is an IPX emulator that allows you to play games designed for LAN play over the Internet. The feature set is very similar; some gamers report better performance using Kahn than using Kali in games such as SU-27 FLANKER.

Price $15; shareware version allows a 21-day free trial.

URL: www.stargatenetworks.com

ICQ

Summary Once you create a list of online "buddies," ICQ will let you know if they're online. You can also engage in real-time chats or send ICQ members messages that they'll receive next time they log on. ICQ has become very popular among gamers for finding opponents in games



ICQ

that don't have lobby servers.

Price Current beta is free; price not yet announced.

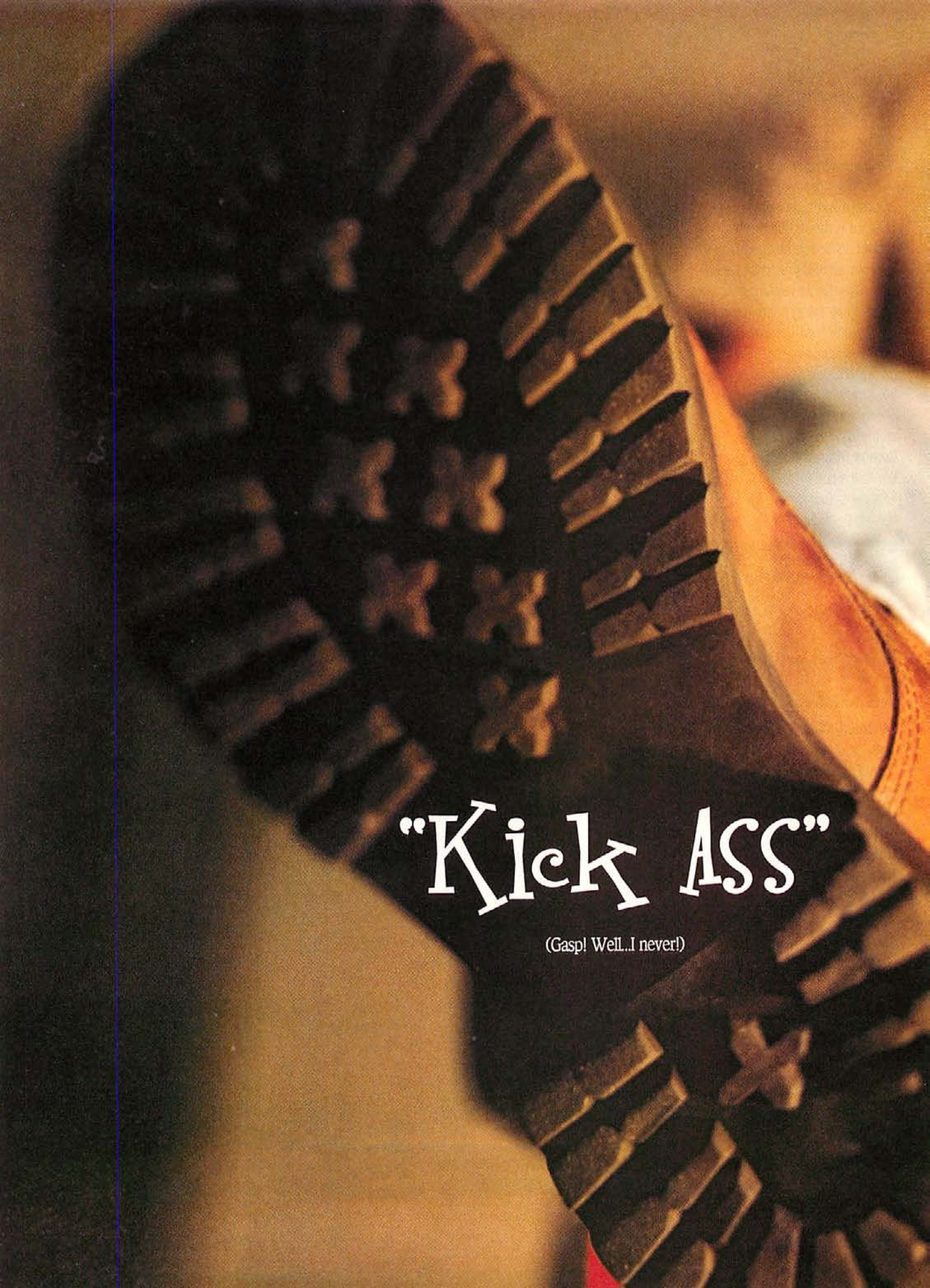
URL: www.mirabilis.com

AOL Instant Messenger

Summary AOL Instant Messenger brings America Online's popular Buddy List feature to the Internet. Simply create a list of people you want to track online and AIM will let you know who's logged on. You can chat with anyone on your list to set up games. It's not as sophisticated as ICQ, but many gamers are choosing it because it's free.

Price Free.

URL: www.aol.com/buddylist


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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #158



Upcoming Games Aliens Online, Jack Nicklaus 4 Online, Silent Death, Stellar Emperor
Price Structure $4.95 a month for 4 hours, $1.80 for each additional hour. Premier plan: $39.95 for 40 hours, $1.20 for each additional hour.
URL: www.gamestorm.com

Simutronics

Summary Simutronics started as a provider of multiplayer games for online services and now offers direct access to its games via the Internet. The service's games are designed from the ground up for online play, and range from detective mysteries to RPGs and 3D action. Look for some of the older titles to get major facelifts in coming months; early screens from the upcoming enhanced version of CyberStrike look as good as any off-the-shelf 3D robot-game today. In early 1998 Simutronics will premiere a new RPG based on the two popular syndicated TV series *Hercules: Legendary Journeys* and *Xena: Warrior Princess*. Hercules and Xena fans will seek adventure and fight monsters using a tongue-in-cheek combat system that follows the style of the series.
Games Offered CyberStrike, DragonRealms, Gemstone III, Modus Operandi
Upcoming Games Archmage, CyberStrike 2, Hercules/Xena
Price Structure $9.95 a month for all current games except CyberStrike, which is $7.95 a month.
URL: www.simutronics.com

OceanLine

Summary OceanLine, from European developers Ocean and Infogrames, differentiates itself by offering not just exclusive games, but a new exclusive game each month. These range from simple

Stand-Alone Games

Stand-alone online games that aren't affiliated with a particular gaming service are also growing in popularity. Some of these, such as Ultima Online and Tanarus, are associated with current game companies; others, such as Underlight and FireTeam, are efforts from smaller developers. Here's a quick peek at some of the more interesting titles now online or slated for release soon.

Ultima Online

Summary Perhaps the most ambitious online RPG yet, this is a massively multiplayer version of the classic Ultima series. Still in beta as we went to press, it's growing more impressive as Origin improves the game's performance. However, early in beta, a gamer killed Lord British, so there goes the goal that many players had set for themselves....
URL: www.ultimaonline.com


ULTIMA ONLINE

Tanarus

Summary Tanarus is a fast-paced, multiplayer action game that puts you in control of a futuristic battle tank.
URL: tanarus.station.sony.com


LEGAL CRIME

Legal Crime

Summary Your chance to try your hand as a Chicago mobster. Beware the other syndicates, though.
URL: www.byteenchanters.com

NetWar

Summary A fast-paced, overhead-view arcade shooter; you'll drive everything from a battle tank to a jet pack.
URL: www.netwar.com

Lords of Empyria

Summary Lords of Empyria is an RPG in the vein of Ultima Online. Build your own kingdom!
URL: www.empyria.com

Meridian 59: Revelation

Summary This updated version of the popular first-person RPG boasts a larger world, improved NPC characters, better quests, and monsters you can tame to fight on your side.
URL: meridian.3do.com

SubSpace

Summary Easy to learn, yet surprisingly addictive. Imagine Asteroids with power-ups, obstacles, and hundreds of other players gunning for you.
URL: subspace.vie.com

Chron-X

Summary Genetic Anomalies' Chron X is a collectible card game played via the Internet. Basic play is free, but booster packs will cost you.
URL: www.chronx.com

Underlight

Summary Another 3D RPG, still shrouded in secrecy at press time.
URL: www.lyrastudios.com

FireTeam

Summary An isometric, team-based action shooter. Imagine Crusader with dozens of players in the arena at once. Now imagine them all shouting orders using voice technology.
URL: www.multitude.com

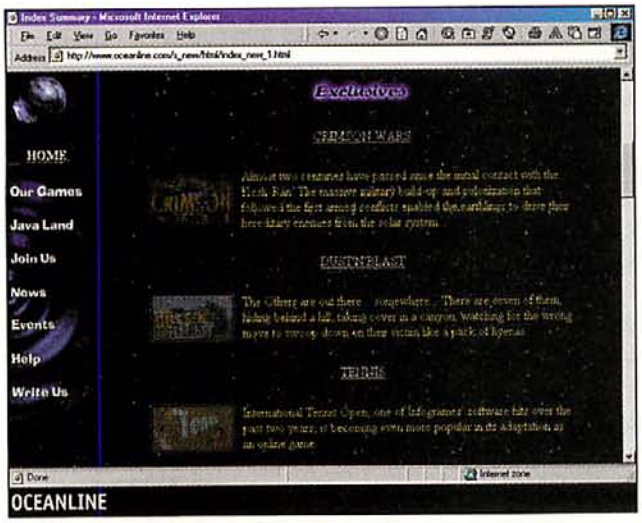

FIRETEAM

The Chessmaster Network

Summary If you're a chess fan, this is *the* place to be on the Web.
URL: www.chessmaster.com

Phoenix Armada

Summary This 3D RPG takes place in a *Battlestar: Galactica*-style universe, with a fleet carrying the remains of humanity trying to escape destruction.
URL: www.arcg.com



OCEANLINE

kids' arcade games to 3Dfx-enhanced multiplayer action games like the DUST N' BLAST racing shooter.
Games Offered BATTLE OF THE PIRATES, BLITZ, CHESS, CRIMSON WARS, DIAGONAL OF ACES, DUST N' BLAST, MINI-GOLF, TENNIS, various kids' games
Upcoming Games BACKGAMMON, CHECKERS, DEEP TROUBLE, ELEMENTALS, EXECS, POOL ACADEMY
Price Structure $4.95 a month for five hours, $1.95 for each additional hour.
URL: www.oceanline.com

I-Magic Online

Summary Formerly known as ICI Games, I-Magic Online got its start with the superb, hard-core World War II flight sim WARBIRDS. Since then the company has added PLANETARY RAIDERS, a space-trading and combat game. In addition to the recently released WARBIRDS 2.0, the company is developing FIGHTER OPS and RAIDER WARS, versions of its flagship games that are more accessible to beginners. Look for eventual support for arena play of various Interactive Magic boxed games as well.
Games Offered PLANETARY RAIDERS, WARBIRDS
Upcoming Games FIGHTER OPS, RAIDER WARS
Price Structure $10 a month for 5 hours; $1.75 to $2 for each additional hour, depending on which ISP you use to access the game.
URL: www.imagiconline.com

2AM Internet Games

Summary Another company offering games designed for exclusive play, 2AM touts that its Creation design system allows it to create a new game world in six days. The games don't have the flash and dazzle of offerings on other services, however, and are mainly appealing for their multiplayer aspects and low monthly fee.
Games Offered ALLIANCE & DEFENSE, ANIMATED CHESS, BACKGAMMON, CHECKERS, CHESS, ENTREPRENEUR, THE INVISIBLE HAND, TOTAL WAR
Upcoming Games CHAIN OF COMMAND, POKER
Price Structure $9.95 a month; $30 for unlimited play until December 31, 1997.
URL: www.2amgames.com

On-Line PLC

Summary On-Line's first offering, IRON WOLVES, is a naval warfare game with a twist. If you want to try the game without committing to a subscription, you can join the game as a tanker captain. Unarmed, you're little more than a target for the paying gamers who roam the seas in submarines and destroyers, but it gives you a way to get a feel for the action.
Games Offered IRON WOLVES
Upcoming Games AGE OF THE THRONE
Price Structure £6 a fortnight (that's approximately $10 per two weeks for us Yanks) for unlimited play.
URL: www.on-line.co.uk

PassPort2

Summary From Legacy Software comes this site with parlor and trivia games. Although the price is quite low, there's little here that can't be found for free on other services. Parents, however, will appreciate the free educational games available on the site.
Games Offered BACKGAMMON, BRIDGE, CHESS, INTELLIGENTSIA
Price Structure $4.95 a month, $24.95 for 6 months, or $39.95 for a year.
URL: www.passport2.com

E-On

Summary E-On offers a number of custom-designed multiplayer games such as BATTLECITY, an *Escape from New York*-style game in which you can play either a mercenary or the mayor. There's also entertainment designed specifically for families. But what many old-time gamers might find most intriguing is E-On's selection of older single-player games available for download to members. At press time, for example, LEMMINGS 2, SPEEDBALL 2, and the original SIM CITY were among the available downloads.
Games Offered BATTLECITY, BLACKJACK, CHECKERS, CHESS, HOVER RACE, POKER, REVERSI, SPEED, TWILIGHT LANDS
Upcoming Games E-On has announced it will be developing games specifically for users with broadband, high-speed net connections, such as cable modems.
Price Structure $9.95 a month
URL: www.e-on.com

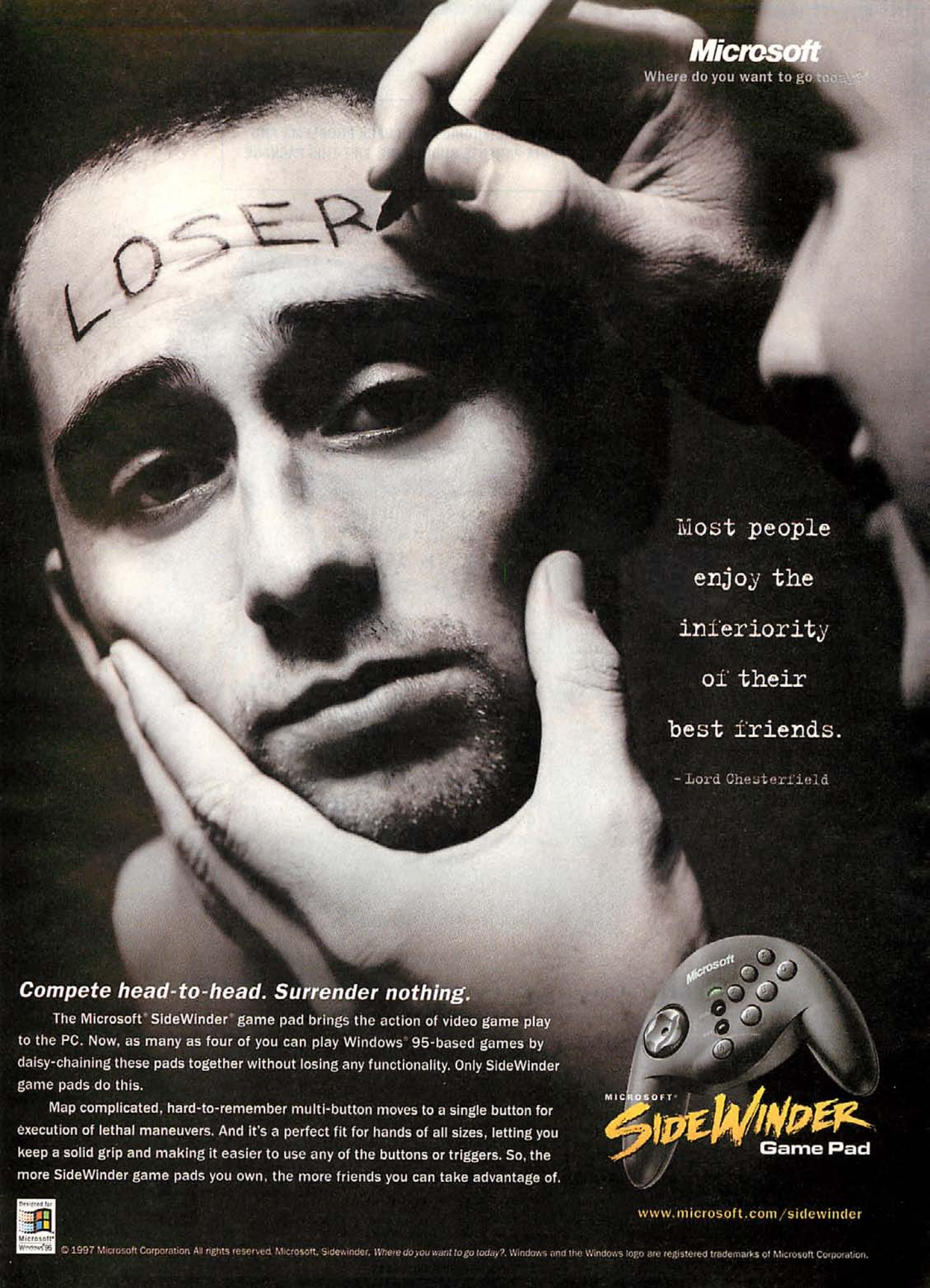
DWANGO

Summary DWANGO is by far the most unusual of the services profiled here, as it's not connected to the Internet. Instead, you dial up a local DWANGO server, which provides you a direct connection to competitors, with none of the latency delays caused by the sending of data over the Internet.



DWANGO

Started as a single server in Houston in 1994 for DOOM players, DWANGO has grown to feature more than 25 servers in major cities, with 25 more planned before year's end. In addition, you can access DWANGO via Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone: Select the service there and you'll be disconnected from the Web and hooked up to your local DWANGO server.
Games Offered BLOOD, DOOM (and every variant thereof), DUKE NUKEM 3D, HERETIC, MECHWARRIOR II NETMECH, SHADOW WARRIOR, STRIFE, **Terminal** VELOCITY, WARCRAFT II.
Price Structure $7.95 a month for 5 hours, $19.95 for each additional 10-hour block
URL: www.dwango.com



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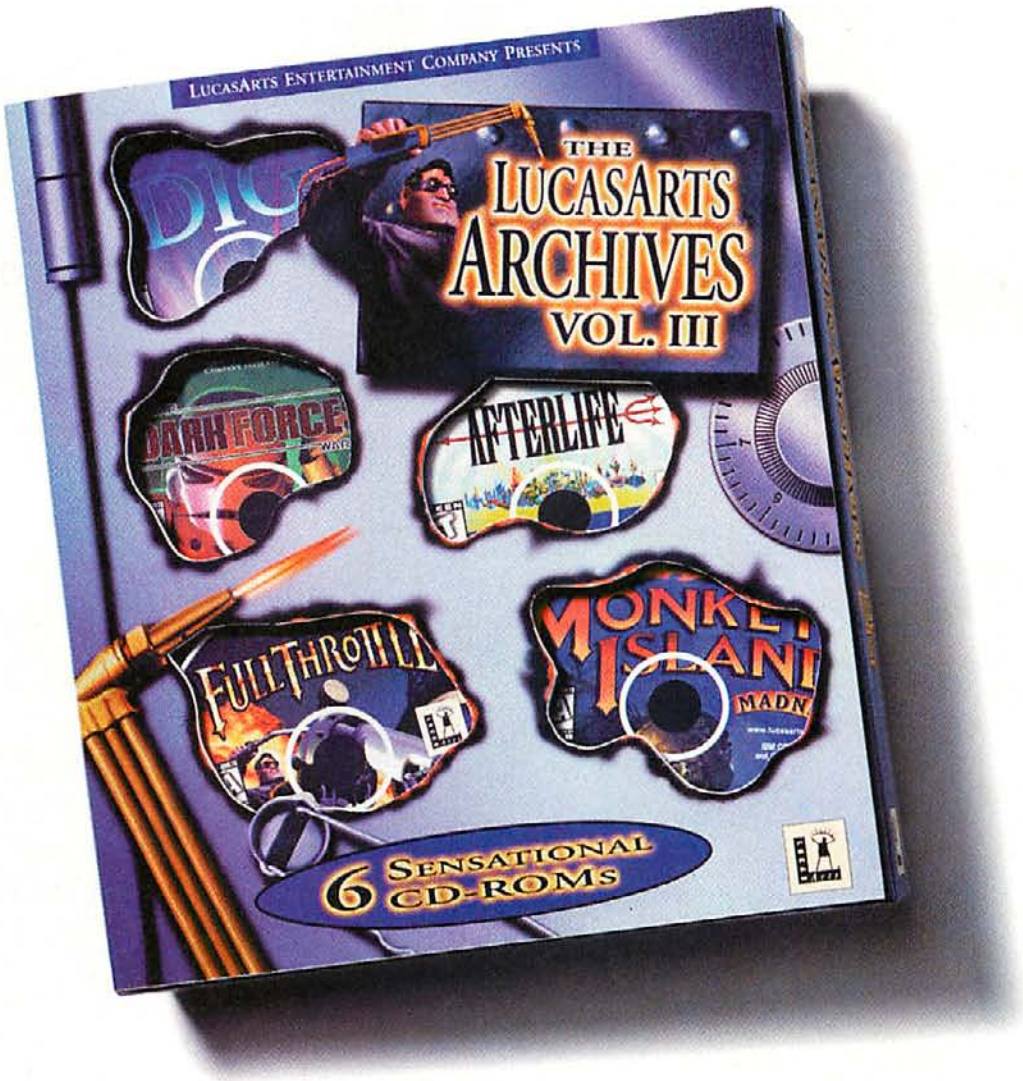
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Garage Mechanics

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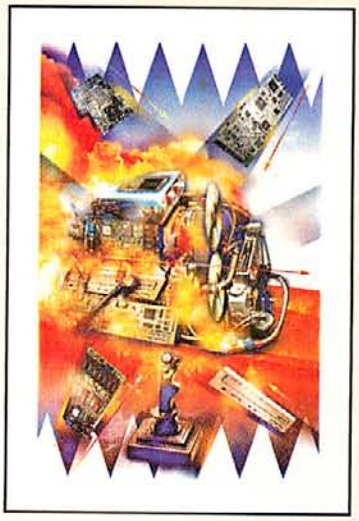
Like a lot of people, I grew up in a suburb in the shadow of a larger city. It was a pretty idyllic life, although in our teenage angst, we believed we were living only one level above the nether regions.

Cars were a popular pastime in my high school. You couldn't go anywhere without someone pontificating about 'em. There were the muscle car guys, the tiny little British sports car guys, and the rest of us who got to drive our parents cars—if we were lucky. That didn't stop us from talking about cars, though. On weekends or after school, you could go to any of a number of garages and find a school kid—and often, his dad—peering under the hood of a car, figuring out what to do next.

Now it's time to peer underneath a different kind of hood (usually beige colored) that lies either on our desks or just underneath them. Last month, I talked about how a new system might look a year from now, from a fairly high-level perspective. This time, we'll dive into the guts of your current PC and take a closer look at some of the new and emerging standards—and maybe try to clear up some confusion.

HELLO, MR. CHIPS

Inside your PC is a handful of chips that handles all the traffic cop chores—boring stuff that needs to happen. These chips are the *core logic* chipsets. The most common ones out there are made by Intel, but there are a few others by companies such as SIS, Via, and AMD. These little-appreciated chips take care of a lot of housekeeping and communication such as EIDE disk interfaces, serial and parallel ports, interfaces to the secondary cache, and data paths to memory and the CPU. Often, limitations on the chipset are the root cause of some problems. For example, the 440FX chipset was used in most Pentium Pro and Pentium II motherboards until quite recently. It almost always surprises someone who gets a hot new 300MHz Pentium II system only do discover that, for example, DUKE NUKEM runs slower than on their buddy's creaky old Pentium 166. It's not the Pentium II that's the problem, it's the 440FX. Or, rather, it's how the 440FX handles the graphics data stream between the PCI bus, the memory, and the CPU. Those in the know realize that odd utilities like FastVid turn on certain features of the Pentium II or Pentium Pro that bunch up (cache) graphics data and fire it out in bursts that greatly improve graphics performance. In addition to implementing the new AGP (accelerated graphics port) connection, the new 440LX chipset is supposed to have streamlined all the I/O handled by the Pentium II.



Another chip that's caused grief for some gamers is the keyboard controller. Sometimes a separate chip and sometimes integrated with other chips, the keyboard controller is a critical part of the system. Some time ago, some systems used keyboard controllers that polled the keyboard port more quickly than the commonly accepted standard. In other words, the keyboard controller would check for keyboard input much more often than earlier systems—but the time they had to read the data was shorter. The result was that a number of visible, high-priced game controllers that shared the keyboard port suddenly stopped working when users upgraded. The manufacturers of the controllers had to make some internal design changes to set things right.

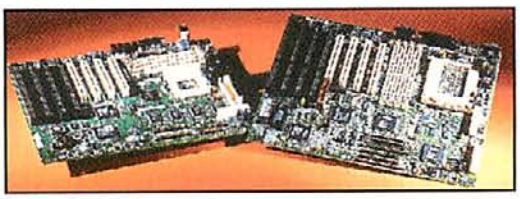
> "Sometimes, mixing new and old technology results in a whole that is much less than the sum of its parts."

MASTERING THE BUS

Another area of confusion is the PCI bus. Now, I firmly believe that PCI is a wonderful invention, and PCI 2.1 is a big improvement. But guess what? Not all PCI buses are created equal. Maybe it's a bug in the vendor's BIOS. Maybe it's a slightly out-of-spec capacitor causing problems. Maybe the phase of the moon is incorrect. But sometimes, bus-mastering just doesn't work. Not too long ago, I was benchmarking the Matrox Mystique 220 for another publication. In discussions with Matrox, I found out that the system I was using—a Pentium 166—should have run 3D WinBench much faster. According to the Matrox utilities, bus-mastering was turned on, and an IRQ was properly assigned to the card. On a hunch, I moved the card to a different system (also a Pentium 166). Lo and behold, the 3D WinBench score suddenly jumped a full 25 percent. Sometimes, mixing new technology—a bus-mastering PCI 2.1 compliant graphics card—and an older version of the PCI bus results in a whole that is much less than the sum of its parts.

All bus-mastering does is allow the peripheral or expansion card to take control of the PCI bus for brief periods of time, usually to perform some kind of DMA (direct memory access) transfer. It's like the crosswalk cop who stops cars to let the neighborhood kids get to school. Take the trusty EIDE interface as another example. The conventional wisdom is that SCSI hard drives are faster than EIDE drives. In fact, this is partly true because most SCSI drives rotate faster and have faster access times and bigger internal buffers. But why should two drives that are identical run differently? Most high-performance SCSI controllers used for hard drives are bus-mastering controllers.

If you drop in a bus-mastering EIDE driver (which you can get from your motherboard vendor), suddenly EIDE throughput shoots up. This was really noticeable in a Panasonic CD-ROM drive I tested. I got the usual 70–80 percent CPU utilization at full speed until I installed the bus-mastering EIDE driver Panasonic supplies with its retail kit. Suddenly CPU utilization dropped to around 13 percent. In a game environment, this might translate to smoother video or audio effects during gameplay and fewer pauses while data is loaded from the CD.



On the hard-drive front, the new UltraDMA/33 standard for EIDE drives will probably have a positive impact on performance. Early results with Intel's 430TX chipset, which has built-in support for UltraDMA/33, show only a modest increase in performance. But now UDMA/33 has significantly increased the *potential* throughput of the EIDE interface by as much as twofold. In the past, it didn't make sense to have a 7200 RPM EIDE drive—the bus couldn't handle it. That's now changed. So perhaps we'll begin to see EIDE drives with the kind of rotational speed and buffer sizes that have in the past been restricted to high-performance SCSI drives.

THE MOTHER OF ALL BOARDS

Motherboard designs continue to evolve. In the near future, systems will become much easier to use, and adding new enhancements will be easier. This simplicity comes at the price of extra internal complexity. Tweaking and building custom systems that actually hang together and work properly will get more difficult in the future. It's like a modern computerized car engine—tweaking a carburetor was always a bit of black magic, but touching a computer-controlled fuel injection system is a recipe for disaster.

Despite this creation of a sort of virtual mini-van approach to PCs, there's still room for the hot-rod fans to dive into the guts of their systems; talk motherboards, chipsets, CPUs, and memory clocks; and argue incessantly over which are the better parts and configurations. Most of us will never want to be that garage mechanic, but at least we'll all get to learn from him.

CGTIPS!

FORCING DIRECTX

Got the DirectX blues? The latest Windows 95 game hosed your system? Uninstalling DirectX is a rough chore, but the next best thing is forcing a reinstall from a known good source. Download the latest end-user version of DirectX 5.0 from **www.microsoft.com/directx**. Expand it into a directory and then run its setup program. You can force a reinstall, just in case an older version trashed your system.

3DFX AND PICTURE DISTORTION

If you're getting a fuzzy or distorted screen in normal 2D stuff when you have a 3Dfx card installed, there are a couple of things to try. First, if you have an older S3 card (such as the Diamond Stealth Video series) that uses an S3 868 or 968 chip, get the S3 fix from the 3Dfx Web site, **www.3dfx.com**. If that's not the problem, one thing to try is to move the cards around so that they're in different PCI slots. The Matrox Millennium, in particular, seems to suffer from this problem. Usually having one or two slots between the two cards (if possible) can cure the problem. (It doesn't matter if you have cards between them.)

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Cyrix Fails to Stand and Deliver

Despite Impressive Integer Performance, Floating-Point Performance Still Falters

by Loyd Case and Dave Salvator



This may well be the year in which Cyrix almost catches up to Intel. Their new 6x86MX processor with MMX is billed to be a less expensive, but equally capable chip when compared to Intel's offerings. Originally code-named M2, the 6x86MX has gotten quite a bit of buzz, due to its sophisticated internal architecture and revamped floating-point unit.

The marketing tack that both Cyrix and AMD have taken in comparing their chips to Intel's offerings is to focus on integer performance almost exclusively, since this is the data type most heavily used by business applications. And while this aspect of performance is very important for gaming as well, 3D titles need fast floating-point performance from the CPU to keep data flowing smoothly to the 3D accelerator at the other end of the 3D pipeline. Also, there's MMX performance to consider.

Price: About $280 (as of August 1)
Vendor: Cyrix Corp.
www.cyrix.com
Reader Service #: 316

The 6x86MX PR200 really clocks at 166 MHz, but Cyrix positions it squarely against Intel's P55C/200. And in a subset of the tests we used in August's CPU roundup, Cyrix's latest chip fared well on the integer side when compared against Intel and AMD, but on floating-point performance, a crucial consideration for gamers, the results weren't pretty when compared to Intel.

Looking to the numbers, all three chips are comparable in 16-bit integer performance, and while Cyrix is slightly ahead of Intel's P55C in 32-bit performance, both are well behind AMD, which comes in about 18 percent faster than Intel and Cyrix. It's here that the similarity in performance ends. In 3D WinBench 97, whose 3D pipeline stresses a CPU's floating-point unit, Intel is the clear winner, delivering close to twice Cyrix's performance. We saw similar results running QUAKE's TimeDemo tests, where Intel was the top finisher, AMD was a respectable second, and Cyrix well behind.

Given that Intel has radically dropped prices recently, Cyrix doesn't even command much of a price difference. In fact, if you're on a really tight budget, it might be worth checking out the AMD K6, as AMD has cut their prices by as much as 40 percent. It's still not as quick as the equivalent P55C for gaming, but its low price makes the K6 much more interesting than the poorly performing 6x86MX.

APPEAL: Those totally committed to the Cyrix product line.

PROS: Good integer performance; makes a great little space heater.

CONS: Slow floating-point performance compared to Intel; not a good 3D gaming CPU.

CG RATED

PERFORMANCE TESTS

	QUAKE TimeDemo (640x480)	QUAKE TimeDemo (320x200)	3D WinBench 97 with 3Dfx-based 3D Board	WinBench 97 CPUMark 32	WinBench 97 CPUMark 16
AMD K6/200	14.7	40.7	104	509	419
Intel P55C/200	17.2	46.8	135	430	432
Cyrix 6x86MX PR200	10.8	28.3	70	435	421
	BETTER ▸	BETTER ▸	BETTER ▸	BETTER ▸	BETTER ▸


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CIRCLE READER SERVICE # 061

★★★★☆ **REVIEW • MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER FORCE FEEDBACK PRO**

Use the Force

Microsoft's Joystick Gets the Hippie Hippie Shake

by Denny Atkin

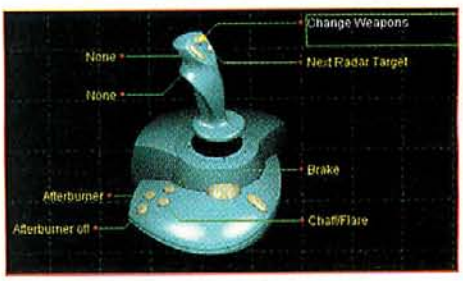
Simulated combat is already an intense experience, but the tactile feedback provided by a force-feedback joystick makes the experience all the more real. Motors in the joystick's handle create a number of physical effects such as motor-idling vibrations, gun recoil, and stick resistance in various directions. In vehicle simulations the effects can be startlingly immersive, with the stick reactions closely approximating what you'd feel in real life. One you've tried a force-feedback stick, standard joysticks feel somehow loose and unresponsive.

Price: $149.95
Vendor: Microsoft Corp.
(206) 882-8080
www.microsoft.com/sidewinder
Reader Service #: 317

CARRY A BIG STICK

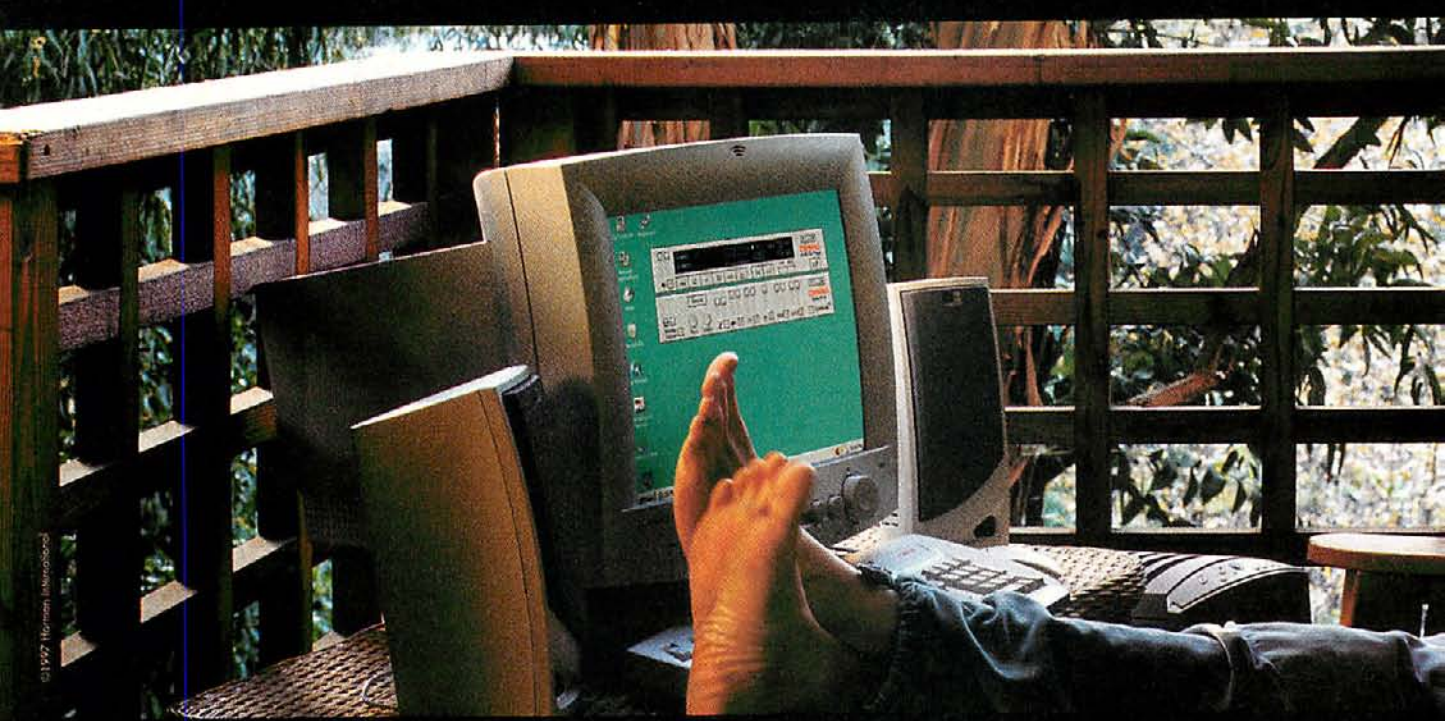
Microsoft's SideWinder Force Feedback Pro (SFFP) is the first of the second generation of force-feedback joysticks, incorporating a digital design which allows it to create more subtle effects than its first-generation predecessor, CH Products' Force FX.

The stick bears a strong resemblance to Microsoft's original SideWinder 3D Pro. The base itself is much larger and heavier than the earlier design, necessitated by the machinery and electronics required by the force feedback mechanism. The handle has been nicely redesigned, with a more ergonomic grip and much better placement of the handle buttons. Like the original SideWinder 3D, the handle twists and can act as a rudder control. On the base you'll find a throttle dial, four additional buttons, and a shift button which lets you assign a second function to each button.



BUTTON DOWN You can assign any key string or combination to the SideWinder's buttons.

WAS AT WORK.



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Computer Living room Home theater Stadium Studio Concert hal

Programming the stick is a snap. Simply open the SideWinder profile editor, select the joystick (if you have more than one SideWinder device configured), and choose the button you wish to program. The software can handle multiple-key combinations and can differentiate between the numbers on the main keyboard and on the numeric pad. Note that only the buttons can be programmed; the eight-way hat switch and throttle dial have fixed functionality.

Microsoft's stick uses the joystick port's MIDI capabilities for communication, so you'll only need the single connection. Owners of SoundBlaster-compatible sound cards shouldn't have any problem with this, but some multifunction cards may not implement the MIDI protocol on their joystick ports.

SHAKE, RATTLE, & ROLL

The SFFP comes bundled with force-enabled demo versions of MDK and SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE, as well as a full-blown, force-enabled version of INTERSTATE '76. I also tested the stick with beta versions of SABRE ACE and FLIGHT SIMULATOR 98. Overall, it's very impressive, with effects such as driving over a rough surface or an idling engine vibration handled with more subtlety than is the case with the CH stick. The effects really enhance vehicle simulations, even in arcade situations like flying the snowspeeder in SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE; they're more gimmicky in sports and first-person games. Note that games must have force feedback support built-in, or the SFFP will act just like a standard programmable joystick.

The SFFP does have some annoyances. To cool its electronics, the base packs a fan that sounds like an idling 737 and which is loud enough to drown out all the sound coming from your computer. To be fair, this is really noticeable only when you're using the computer for quiet, boring productivity stuff. Also, while the stick can emulate a CH FlightStick Pro or Thrustmaster FCS in Windows or DOS programs running in a Win 95 DOS box, it will not function in pure DOS mode. And flight-sim fans take note: While you can disable the handle-twist rudder support, the SFFP will not work with an external throttle or rudder pedals connected.

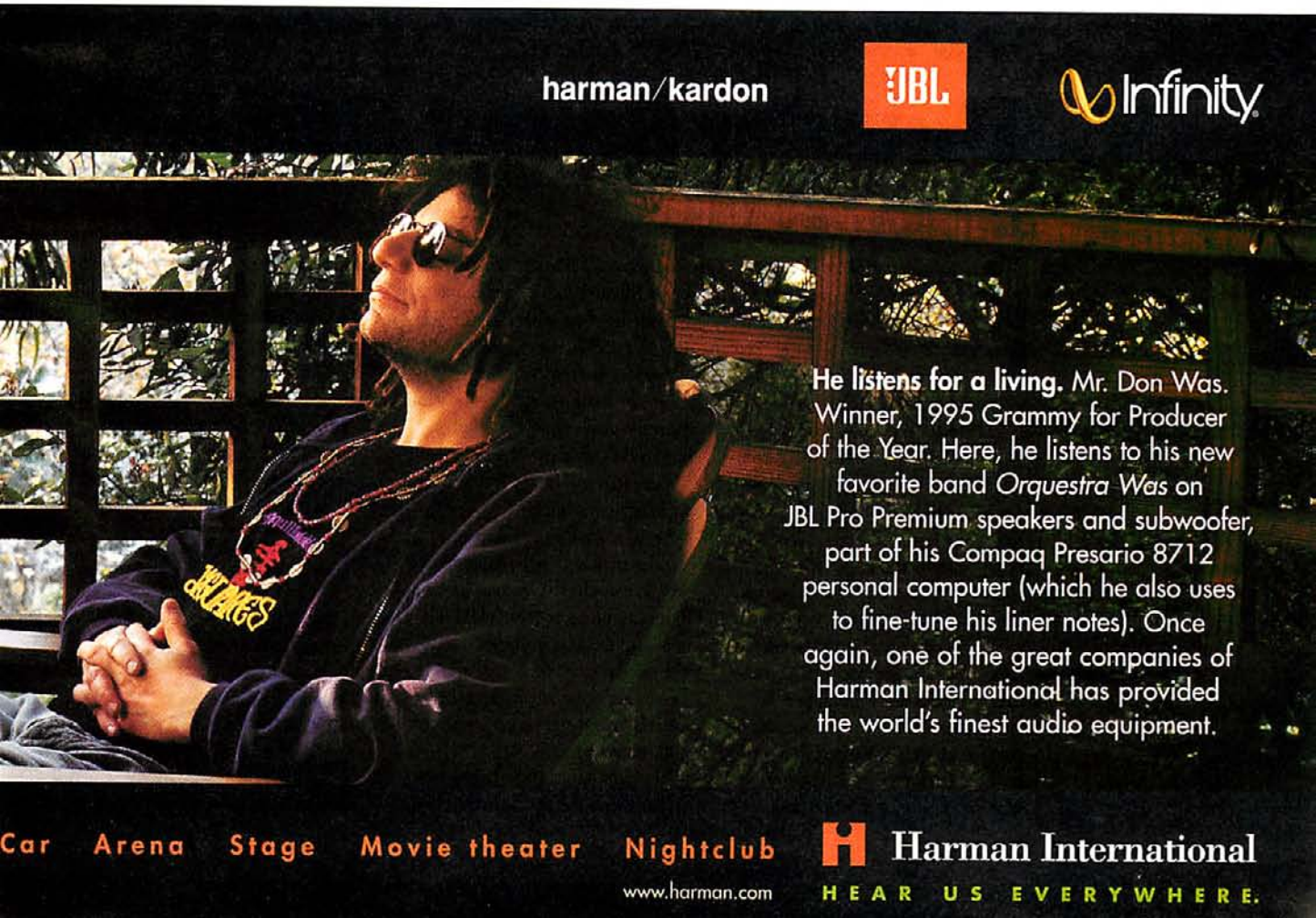
If you're looking for an all-in-one programmable controller and you don't play Win 95-incompatible DOS games, however, you'll find the SideWinder Force Feedback Pro a far more interesting solution than your run-of-the-mill controller.

APPEAL: Gamers who enjoy vehicular sims and action games and are looking for that extra level of immersion; flight-sim fans looking for an all-in-one controller.

PROS: Excellent force feedback effects; comfortable design; well-implemented programming software.

CONS: Hat switch isn't programmable; won't work under MS-DOS; incompatible with rudder pedals; lack of a bundled force editor; annoyingly loud fan.

CG RATED



★★★★½ **REVIEW • COMPETITION DRIVING SYSTEM 5000**

Highway Star



by Gordon Goble

Extreme Competition Controls reached a whole new level of racing hardware sophistication back in 1995 with its Competition Driving System. The two-piece unit, with cams and heavy-metal innards in the place of the bungees and lesser components found elsewhere, targeted the serious simulation driver—and it had the price tag to match.

Now ECC is back with its second generation of products, the pinnacle of which is the Competition Driving System 5000. It's tough to comment on this beefy rig without addressing the price, so let's get that over with right now: It's $1,595. Plus, it isn't force-feedback, and it won't drive your car for you. But it is a most impressive piece of machinery that beautifully replicates the smooth, precise control of a real race car.

The CDS 5000 desktop steering unit is a streamlined affair, painted a deep Ferrari red and topped with a real-life Indy Momo wheel and four adjustable front-firing gear buttons—a lovely place to stick your digits. At 28 pounds, it's sturdy (to be sure) and holds its ground admirably, without clamping, during even the toughest corners.

Behind the wheel, the 9" x 7" cylindrical all-metal shell features a wide slotted foot at the rear for variable driving angles and a pair of travel adjustment knobs that let you modify wheel lock from 170–240 degrees—perfect for anyone who drives both open-wheeled *and* stock cars. You can even alter wheel resistance by opening the housing and adding or removing a series of springs.

The 33-pound, wedge-shaped CDS 5000 pedal unit, also finished in racy red, features no fewer than three polished aluminum pedals (the third is a clutch, a device currently supported only in GRAND PRIX II) and an adjustable heel rest. The articulated throttle sports less resistance near the end of its throw, the brake is air-compressed, and you can custom-modify both. Just make sure you've got plenty of room under your desk, as the unit is sizable and angled for full leg extension.

The CDS 5000 is available only from the manufacturer, and because the small ECC crew often builds to fill current orders and performs extensive testing on each unit, expect up to six weeks for delivery.

Price: $1,595
Vendor: Extreme Competition Controls Inc.
Minneapolis, MN
(612) 824-6733
ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/extreme
Reader Service #: 319

APPEAL: Well-heeled racing simulation aficionados.

PROS: Sleek appearance, fully adaptable design, and the smoothest action on the market today; built to take a serious beating and still handle delicate corners.

CONS: Prohibitively expensive for most PC racers; requires lots of desk and floor space.

CG RATED

★★★½ **REVIEW • SAS MS-5 BAZOOKA SUBWOOFER**

Thunder Below



by Dave Salvator

PC audio, you've come a long way, baby. From the dark days of scratchy 8-bit audio played through unpowered, tin-can "speakers" (read: overgrown headphones), we now have sound cards that crank out better than 85dB signal-to-noise ratio, and speaker systems to match. But as with most multicomponent technologies, developments have come in fits and starts. Multimedia speakers have greatly improved, but often are sorely lacking in low-end response. SAS has a simple solution to this problem: a bazooka. The MS-5 Bazooka, that is.

SAS has developed an enclosure technology it calls "Bass Tubes," which combines bass reflex with a ducted port. It focuses the woofer's output into a single point, which then can be aimed into the corner of a room; the resulting reflection seemingly fills the room with bass.

Installing the Bazooka is fairly straightforward, though the one-eighth-inch jacks for input and output aren't labeled. Also, it's a real chore to install the four rubber feet that ship with the unit. I resorted to using a surgical clamp to pull them into place. On the upside, the Bazooka's external power transformer is a "soap on a rope" design that won't bogart an entire wall socket.

Enough about inner workings, Poindexter, how does the thing sound? Well, in a word: HUGE. I paired the Bazooka with a pair of Koss HD-100s, middle-of-the-road multimedia speakers. The result was, at times, startling. All gaming audio was greatly enhanced, with explosions and weapons-fire effects vastly improved.

The Bazooka has a well-designed control that tweaks overall volume level, bass level, and lets you tweak the cross-over frequency—where Bazooka takes over.

While the Bazooka will rock your gaming world and almost guarantee apartment dwellers an eviction notice, it's not cheap. For the $249 you'd spend on a Bazooka, you could upgrade your entire speaker system with very solid offerings from Yamaha or Cambridge. But if big, bad-ass bass is what you covet, then the Bazooka is for you.

Price: $249
Vendor: SAS
Baton Rouge, LA
(800) THE-TUBE
www.sasbazooka.com
Reader Service #: 322

APPEAL: Gamers seeking boomin' bass for all their gaming audio.

PROS: Produces rafter-rattling bass; versatile control unit.

CONS: More expensive than some entire systems; installation has some rough edges.

CG RATED


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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #257

★★★★½ REVIEW • HITACHI SUPERSCAN ELITE 751

Sight for Sore Eyes



by Loyd Case

I have a confession to make: I don't have a 21-inch monitor. I'd really like to have one, but I have two constraints: They're expensive and they're huge. Then comes Hitachi, with its new Superscan Elite 751. It's a 19-inch monitor (18-inch viewable) that can handle resolutions of up to 1600x1200 at a refresh rate of 75Hz. At $1,149 (less on the street), it's not as cheap as a good 17-inch monitor, but it's far less than even mediocre 21-inch monitors.

Nineteen inches isn't a new form factor; it used to be commonly available on graphics workstations until 21-inch monitors took over the high-end. However, the prices are now much more mainstream, and the form factor is compelling. Weighing in at a relatively svelte 55 pounds, it's not much heavier than a 17-inch monitor. It's also only slightly larger than most 17-inch monitors, so it should fit comfortably on most desks.

The button-activated controls live on the front panel and are fairly intuitive to use. In addition to the typical horizontal/vertical size and position controls, you can tweak pin-cushioning, trapezoid, color temperature, and rotation. The monitor also puts up a refresh-rate number for a few seconds every time you start up or switch resolutions—a very handy feature.

The only downside is that Hitachi doesn't supply a Windows 95 INF file. The 751 is configured as a Windows 95 Plug-and-Play monitor, meaning that refresh rates over 75Hz aren't available unless you manually specify a different monitor type. With most monitors, this can be dangerous since many can't handle very high refresh rates, but the 751 handles them with aplomb. Still, a custom INF from Hitachi would make this jury-rigging unnecessary.

This monitor isn't quite as bright as the aperture grill monitors I generally favor, but that's relative. The image quality in Windows applications and game titles is quite crisp, and the monitor is certainly bright enough. Using ZD's monitor-test utility, convergence looks good, as do geometry and color tracking.

The combination of reasonable cost, modest size, and high-performance features makes this monitor a real winner. Maybe it's finally time to move up.

Price: $1,149
Vendor: Hitachi
(800) 441-4832
www.nsa-hitachi.com
Reader Service #: 321

APPEAL: Gamers wanting more screen real estate for the buck.

PROS: Easy front-panel control setup; 1600x1200 support; high refresh rates; fine dot pitch.

CONS: More expensive than some 19-inch offerings; not quite as bright as aperture grill monitor; no Windows 95 INF file supplied.

CG RATED

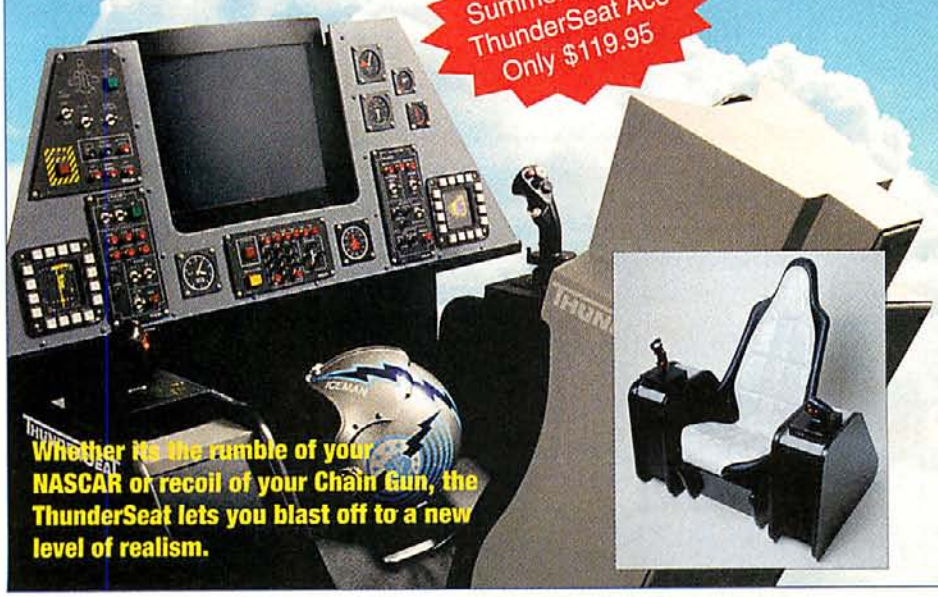
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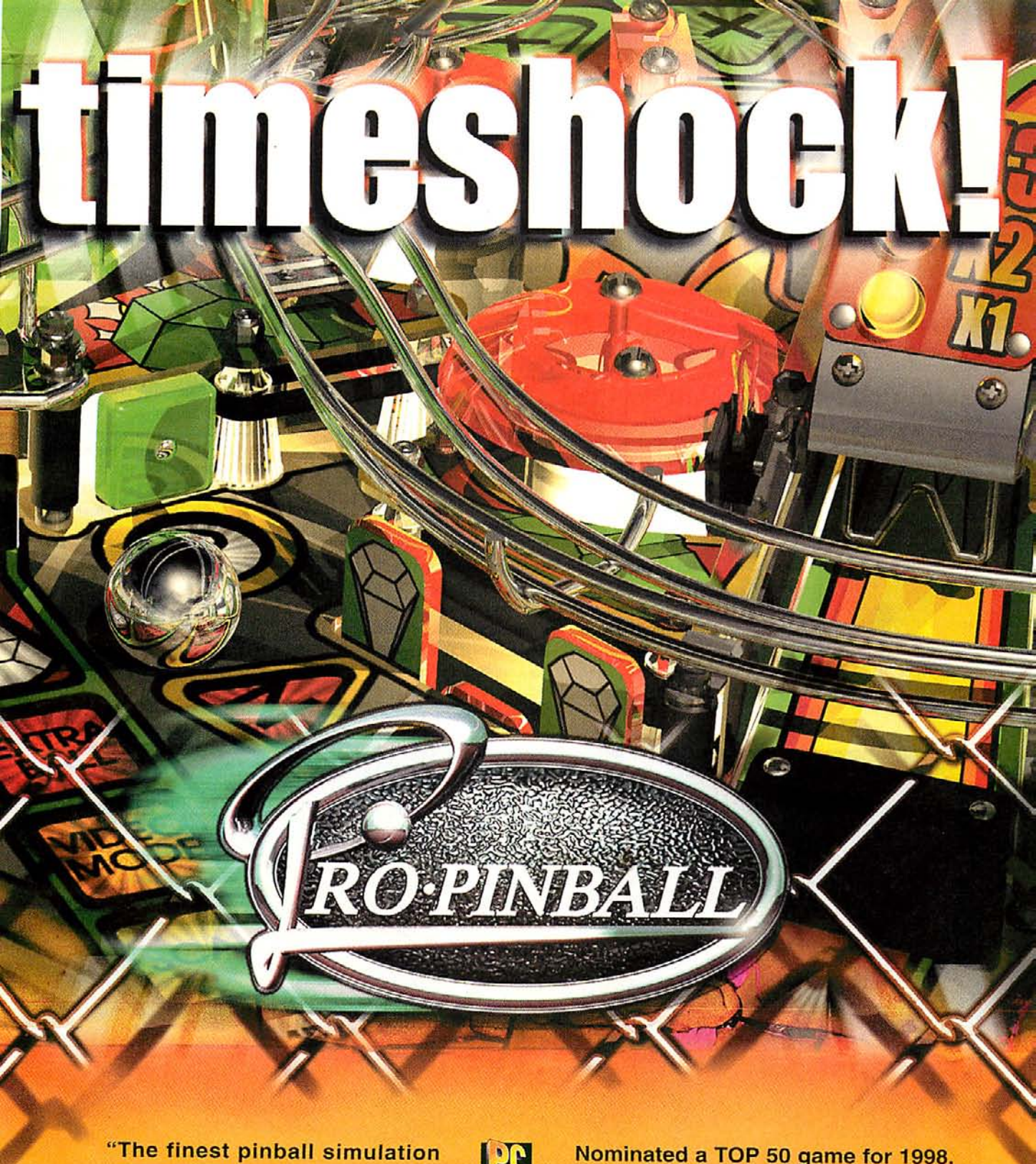
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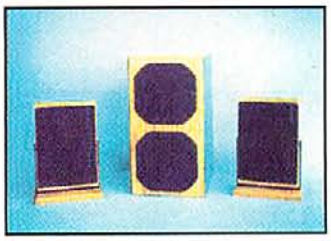
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★★★★★ **REVIEW • EMINENT TECHNOLOGY LFT-II**

Heavy Metal

by Loyd Case

The LFT-II is a "multimedia speaker" system, which means it's designed to connect to your computer system. But it certainly doesn't look like any system I've reviewed before. When the UPS guy pulled the box out of his truck and staggered up my front steps with the box containing this baby, I knew I had something special on my hands.



The LFT-II's weightiness stems from a woofer cabinet that houses two 6-inch bass drivers, which weigh about 20 pounds by themselves. The satellites are quite unusual—wood-framed flat panels that are mounted on stands and can swivel vertically. Plus, for producing mid-range and higher frequencies, there are linear-field transducers, instead of the more traditional cone-shaped drivers.

The result is breathtakingly accurate, crystal-clear audio—if you are sitting in the right place. Since the speakers are designed for computers, all you need to do is place the flat panels so that one is on each side of your ear and pointing roughly at your head. If you wander away from your computer, the sound is still quite good, but the stereo imaging disappears. The speakers in this setup are *dipole radiators*, which means that they are strongly directional. But you won't hesitate to play music on these speakers, as their the sound quality is unparalleled. Of course, all this great sound comes at a price—a hefty $599 (sans amplifier). Oh, and there's one other side effect: If you have a crummy sound card, you'll really know it.

The LFT-II's don't have a built-in amplifier, but for another $100, Eminent Technology will throw in a miniature Optimus receiver that delivers 15 watts-per-channel (RMS). You can also use any stereo receiver or amp that delivers enough power, and they'll handle up to 50 watts-per-channel. If you want the ultimate in computer audio, check these out.

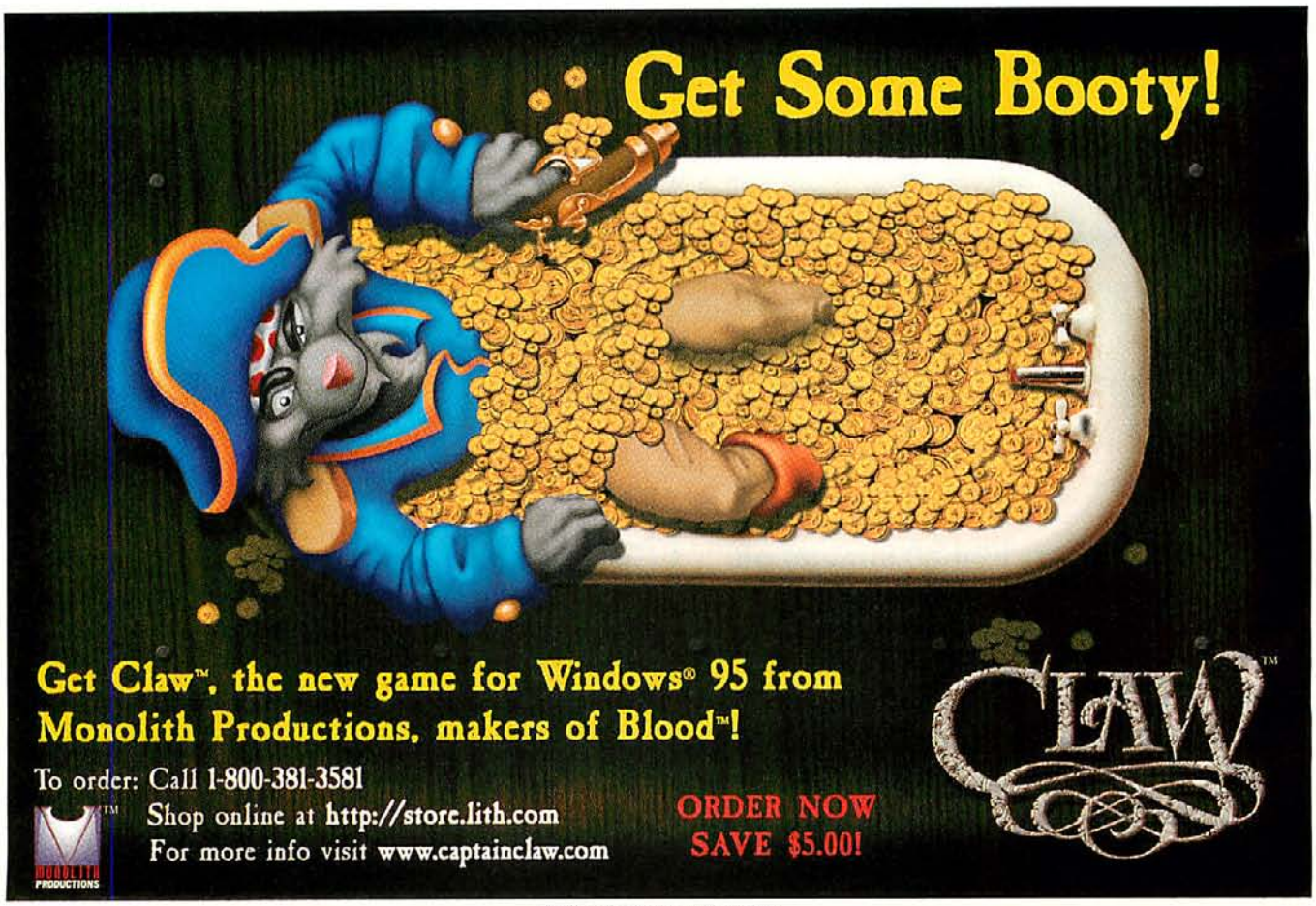
Price: $599 without amplifier, $699 with Optimus 15 watts/channel receiver (shipping included)
Vendor: Eminent Technology (850) 575-5655, www.eminent-tech.com
Reader Service #: 318

APPEAL: Those wanting the best possible sound for their games. 3D gamers not on a budget.

PROS: Highly accurate, flat-panel speakers with great dynamic range and good bass response.

CONS: Your wallet will suffer great pain; highly directional.

CG RATED



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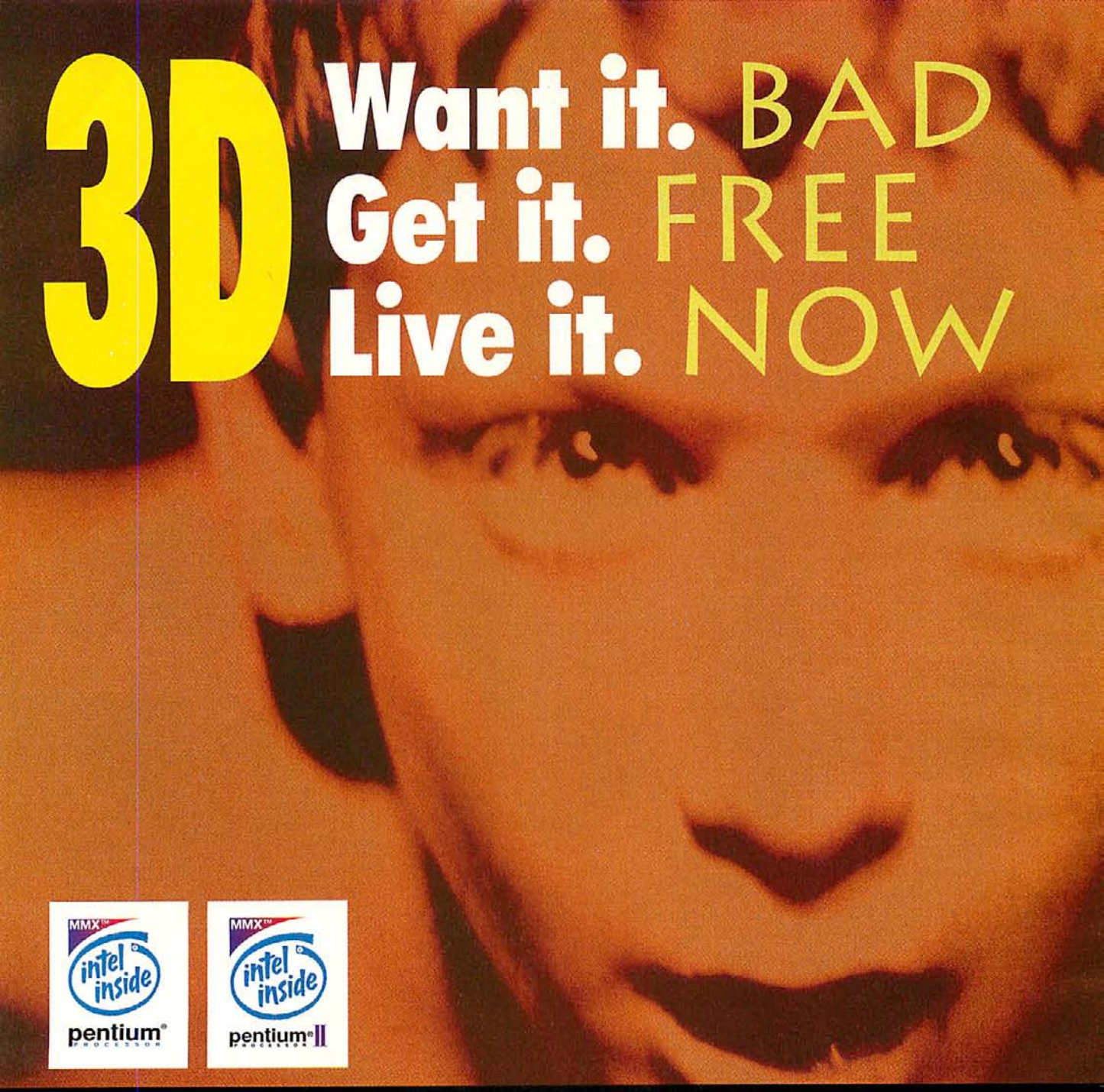
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$2,099 model #GAM500

233 MHz TD-25

- Intel 233MHz Pentium® Processor with MMX
- 32MB (1-32MB) DIMM
- 512K Pipelined Burst Cache
- Intense 3D 100 w/4MB EDO RAM
- 17".27dp, 1280x1024 Monitor (16.0"viewable)
- 3.5GB 10ms EIDE Hard Disk
- Floppy 3.5", 1.44MB
- 7 slots (3 PCI, 3 ISA, 1 Shared), 6 Drive Bays
- 2 USB Ports, 1 Parallel Port, 2 Serial Ports
- Dual EIDE channel/Ultra DMA 33/4 devices

$2,469 model #GAM600

233 MHz TD-225

- Intel 233MHz Pentium® II Processor
- 64MB (2-32MB) EDO SIMMs
- 512K Pipelined Burst Cache
- Intense 3D 100 w/4MB EDO RAM
- 17".27dp, 1280x1024 Monitor (16.0"viewable)
- 1.7GB 10ms EIDE Hard Disk
- Floppy 3.5", 1.44MB
- 7 slots (4 PCI, 2 ISA, 1 Shared), 6 Drive Bays
- 2 USB Ports, 1 Parallel Port, 2 Serial Ports
- Dual EIDE channel/4 devices

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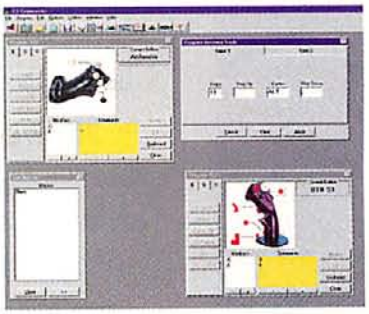
CIRCLE READER SERVICE #074

It's a Control Thing

by Tom "KC" Basham

Most hard-core flight jockeys want to use every bell and whistle of the plane they're flying. But to get at all those controls you have to program your joystick, and for Thrustmaster gear, that can be a daunting task. Sim-Tech may have an answer in Commander—a graphical, Windows-based alternative for anyone intimidated by having to program Thrustmaster equipment. Version 1.0 supports Thrustmaster equipment up to the FLCS/TQS combination, and the version 1.50c patch (available from Sim-Tech's Web site) adds support for the newer, F-22 stick.

I did encounter one glitch when we upgraded to the 1.50c patch: It created a new "Sim-Tech" folder in the Start menu and wiped out all the user settings, and the Uninstall program failed. The fix? Run the upgrade in the directory where Commander is already installed (otherwise it loses information).



The program is very straightforward. When you open a new file, you first specify the desired controller type. Next, you select the desired piece of Thrustmaster equipment. To program an individual button or switch, simply click on the appropriate place in a picture of the device.

Commander supports all of Thrusty's advanced features, including macro files; command grouping with parentheses and curly braces; programming flags such as FLCK, SWAPTG, and NOTHR; raw keyboard scan codes, and so on.

Commander works as advertised. It does not, however, reduce Thrustmaster programming to a simple point-and-click operation. You still need to mind your curly braces and parentheses, and know what FLCK means. So while Commander provides an alternate GUI programming interface, you'll need a pretty thorough understanding of Thrustmaster's programming environment to get the most out of your gear.

APPEAL: Anyone intimidated by programming Thrustmaster sticks.

PROS: A capable, GUI interface.

CONS: Still requires a reasonable understanding of Thrustmaster's programming language.

CG RATED

Price: $35 (approx.)
Vendor: Sim-Tech
(888) 296-5007
www.sim-tech.co.uk
Reader Service #: 323



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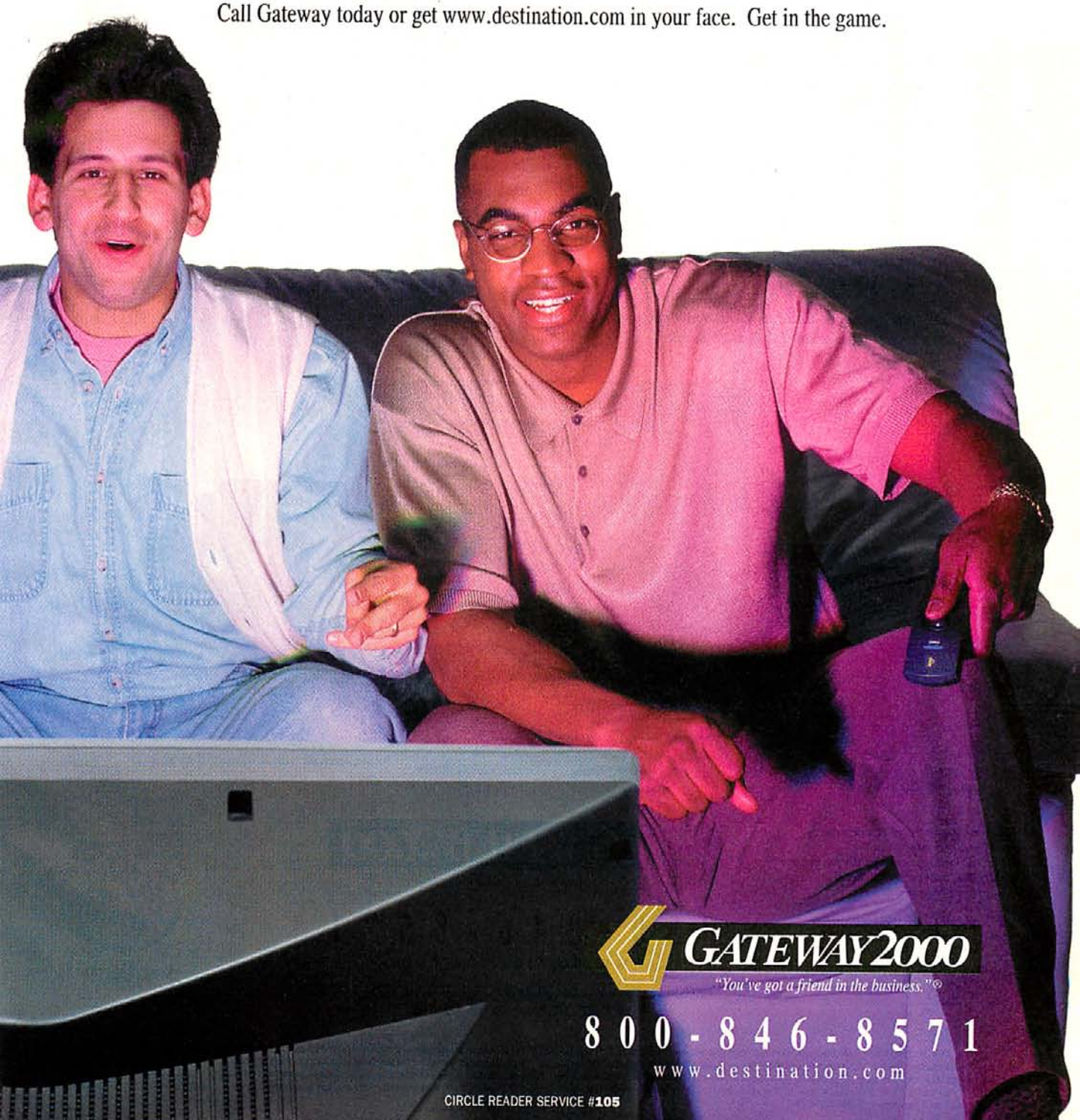
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READER MAIL

I just picked up the August issue of *CGW*. Reading through the reader mail in the front, I see you've been taking a bit of heat over some of your more scathing reviews. I'm just writing to say please, whatever you do, don't give in and soften up your reviews to please these people. Your reviews are some of the most accurate available in any American gaming magazine.

honest opinion of what the game is worth. Some people still prefer a useful game review to a gentle one.

—Owen Davies

What a relief Elliott Chin's review of X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter was. I thought I was going to be the only *Star Wars* fan who was disappointed with the game. I bought the game the first day it was available. I spent a couple of hours installing and reading the manual to ensure I had the optimum setup to do justice to what was sure to be a great game.

The missions seemed enjoyable at first, but I quickly lost interest. I couldn't quite put it into words until I read Elliott's review. He was right on. His likes and dislikes were mine also. The biggest negative is the lack of immersion. In the original TIE Fighter, it felt like you were getting somewhere. You couldn't get to the next mission until you finished the current mission. Along the way, you were rewarded with cut-scenes that showed how your successes added to the plot.

Before I bought X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter, I knew it was mainly a multiple player game. My hope was that it would be a better single-player game than it turned out to be. I guess I'm still glad I bought it—the graphics are great, but I keep wondering if $50 for good graphics was worth it. Who knows, maybe LucasArts will come out with an expansion pack for us single players.

—D. Swanson

When I walk into my local game store and take a look at the PC game section, about 95 percent of the products I see are deserving of a one or a two on your scale. When I open most game magazines, about 95 percent of the products score a perfect or near-perfect score. Something doesn't add up here. It seems that some magazines base their ratings directly on advertising dollars spent and practically photocopy the developer's press sheets to create their "reviews." Please continue to play each game all the way through (what a chore that must be at times!) and give your

"Twinsen's Odyssey is simply the most charming game I've ever played."

—Robert Coffey reviewing Twinsen's Odyssey, pg. 278

CG Choice Games This Month



Twinsen's Odyssey p. 278



Links LS p. 306

HOW DO WE RATE?

We only review finished products, not pre-release versions. The ratings are as follows:

Outstanding: The rare game that gets it all right. The graphics, sound, and gameplay come together to form a Transcendent Gaming Experience. Our strongest buying recommendation.

Very Good: A high-quality game that succeeds in many areas. It may have minor problems, but is still worth your money, especially if you're interested in the subject matter or genre.

Average: A mixed bag. It can be a game that reaches for the stars, but falls short in several ways. It can also be a game that does what it does well, but lacks flair or originality.

Weak: A game with serious problems. Usually buggy, seriously lacking in play value, or just a poorly conceived game design—you should think long and hard before buying it.

Abysmal: The rare game that gets it all wrong. This is reserved for those products so buggy, ill-conceived, or valueless that you wonder why they were ever released in the first place.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

CGW CHOICE

Magical Mystery Tour

With Great Gameplay, Plot, and True Artistic Vision, TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY Is One of the Year's Great Games

by Robert Coffey

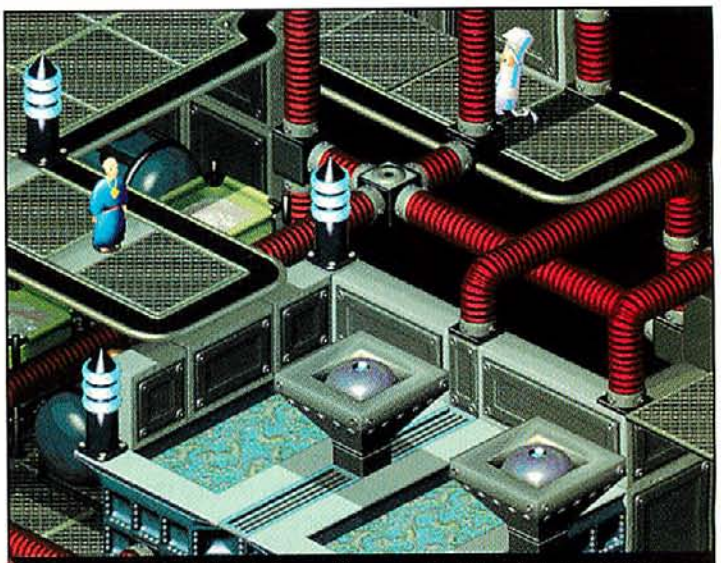


Price: $49.95
Minimum System Requirements: Windows 95 or DOS 6.22; 486DX4/100 for DOS, Pentium processor for Windows 95; 8MB RAM for DOS, 16MB RAM for Windows 95; 35MB uncompressed hard-disk space; 4x CD-ROM drive; 256-color SVGA graphics with VESA local bus or PCI video card; Sound Blaster 16-compatible sound card; joystick and gamepad supported.
Multiplayer Support: None.
Designer: Frederick Raynal and Adeline Software International
Publisher: Activision
Los Angeles, CA 90067
(310) 255-2153
www.activision.com
Reader Service #: 326

Taking place in scores of locations spread across three wonder-filled planets, TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY is a *tour de force* worthy of its epic title. The sweeping scope of the game encompasses and embraces a host of stunningly imaginative environments, each more beautifully rendered and inventive than the last. While such a rich game world is laudable in its own right, TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY doesn't stint on the gameplay, providing hours upon hours of ceaselessly entertaining and challenging puzzles and action sequences in one of the best examples of action/adventure hybrids yet produced.

IT'S A WONDERFUL WORLD

TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY is the sequel to 1994's RELENTLESS (or LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE, as it was known abroad), and action again focuses on the idyllic planet of Twinsun and its perky homonymically named hero, Twinsen. All's well in Twinsun, with Twinsen and his girlfriend, Zoe, expecting their first child any day. Suddenly, a violent thunderstorm rocks Twinsen's quirky village and a stray bolt of lightning strikes his trusty airborne steed, the Dino-fly. Twinsen sets out to heal his pal, and in the process uncovers a plot by the alien Esmers to rocket the nearby Emerald Moon into Twinsun, thus releasing its inherent magical power. The released energy will reincarnate their prophet Dark Monk and restore their homeworld to its original, Edenlike beauty. As Twinsen progresses in his quest to foil the Esmers and rescue the kidnapped



PERIL BY PETROL With wicked vapor jets and pools of toxic fuel, negotiating the platform-hopping dangers of the gas plant is no walk in the park.

Twinsen Tips

While most obstacles and puzzles in TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY can be solved after a little experimentation, some are a little more daunting or dangerous than others. Here's a couple of hints to keep you going.

• The first test of magic (see the screenshot) wouldn't be too tough if not for the time limit. Instead of spinning around and around trying to nail the targets with repeated throws, face the door and start Twinsen's wind-up when the next target reaches the corner to Twinsen's right. Get in a groove and you can mow down the targets with time to spare.

• When you're in the cave off Desert Island, you'll find a room with two crates and no

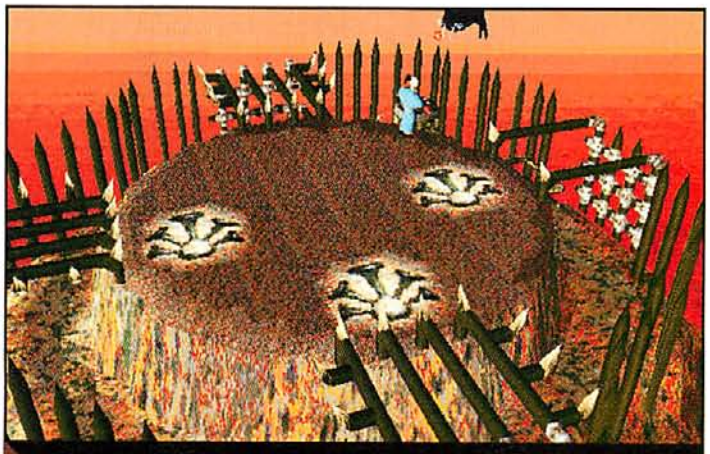


children of Twinsun, he will develop his own magical powers, battle fearsome enemies, ally himself with fantastic alien races, solve several subquests, and explore more than 200 locations across all three planets. It's a big job, but somebody's got to do it.

The most striking aspect of TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY is its graphics. With everything rendered in polygons for full 3D, the rich SVGA-graphics game world is simply breathtaking, especially when Twinsen is scampering across the game's outdoor locations. Every landscape is teeming with life—and what wildly imagined life it is. Nasty Franco soldiers (giant hot dogs) patrolling Twinsun on in-line skates, rabbibunny tourists snapping pictures at sacred volcanoes, and roly-poly scientific genius elephants are just some of the hundreds of fanciful characters, all of who carry on independently when not interacting with Twinsen. The landscapes of TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY are similarly alive, with exaggerated swoops and peaks lending a vibrancy to every exterior location.

One of the great joys in playing this game is the constant surprise of finding something fresh and wholly original around every corner. Interior locations are no exception. During the course of his adventure Twinsen will gamble in a casino, ride a mining cart in an underground temple, storm a women's sauna, leap across lakes of fire in dank gem mines, and infiltrate a seedy waterfront bar with the requisite drunks and exotic Franco dancer. The game's generous cutscenes are always beautifully animated and entertaining.

If there's any knock against the visual design of TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY it's that some of the camera angles make a few tasks more difficult than they should be. Tapping the Return and Backspace keys will change camera angles to provide a more advantageous look at the situation, but in a few rare instances even that won't help.



I AM THE WALRUS Among the legion of enemies Twinsen must face is this fireball-spitting flying walrus. Goo goo ga joob, indeed.

INTERNATIONAL MAN OF MYSTERY

Gameplay in TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY is pretty fairly divided between adventure fare and platform-style action. As the plot unfolds, Twinsen will have to solve several subquests, such as having to find fuel for his rocket-pack. The subquests are tied in so well to the plot and are so much fun to pursue that you never feel as if you're simply running one errand after another—even though you might be. It helps that many of the items you collect come in handy more than once over the course of the game.

But TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY isn't just another scavenger hunt adventure game. To save Twinsun, our hero will have to crack a few skulls and indulge in more than a smattering of swashbuckling derring-do. Employing his magic ball, a blowgun, a laser pistol, a really nifty sabre, and, of course, his fists, Twinsen will square off against a host of adversaries, including multi-armed gorilla assassins, spiny demons, gun-toting cacti, and hostile aliens that resemble James Woods. A generous supply of power-ups that replenish magical power, health, and extra lives keeps Twinsen going.

Puzzles are primarily presented in the form of obstacles blocking Twinsen's path, and many involve jumping sequences. Twinsen leaps onto moving platforms, jumps from one precipice to another, and scales ladders, frequently while dodging enemy attacks. There's even a spectacular Evel Knievel-style car jump for good measure. While movement can be handled with keyboard or joystick, I found a gamepad works best.

With its unparalleled sense of marvel and imagination, engaging story, and deft mix of action and adventure, TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY is a true delight and simply the most charming game I've ever played. Gamers who pass it by are depriving themselves of one of the most rewarding games of this, or any other, year.

way to reach the very high exit. Push one crate onto the right elevator. Put the other crate on the other lift, jump the spikes, throw the ball at the switch, and ride up. Push the crate over and down on top of the first crate and jump down on top of the two. In Discreet mode, lob your ball at the switch and ride up. You can now jump to the next room.

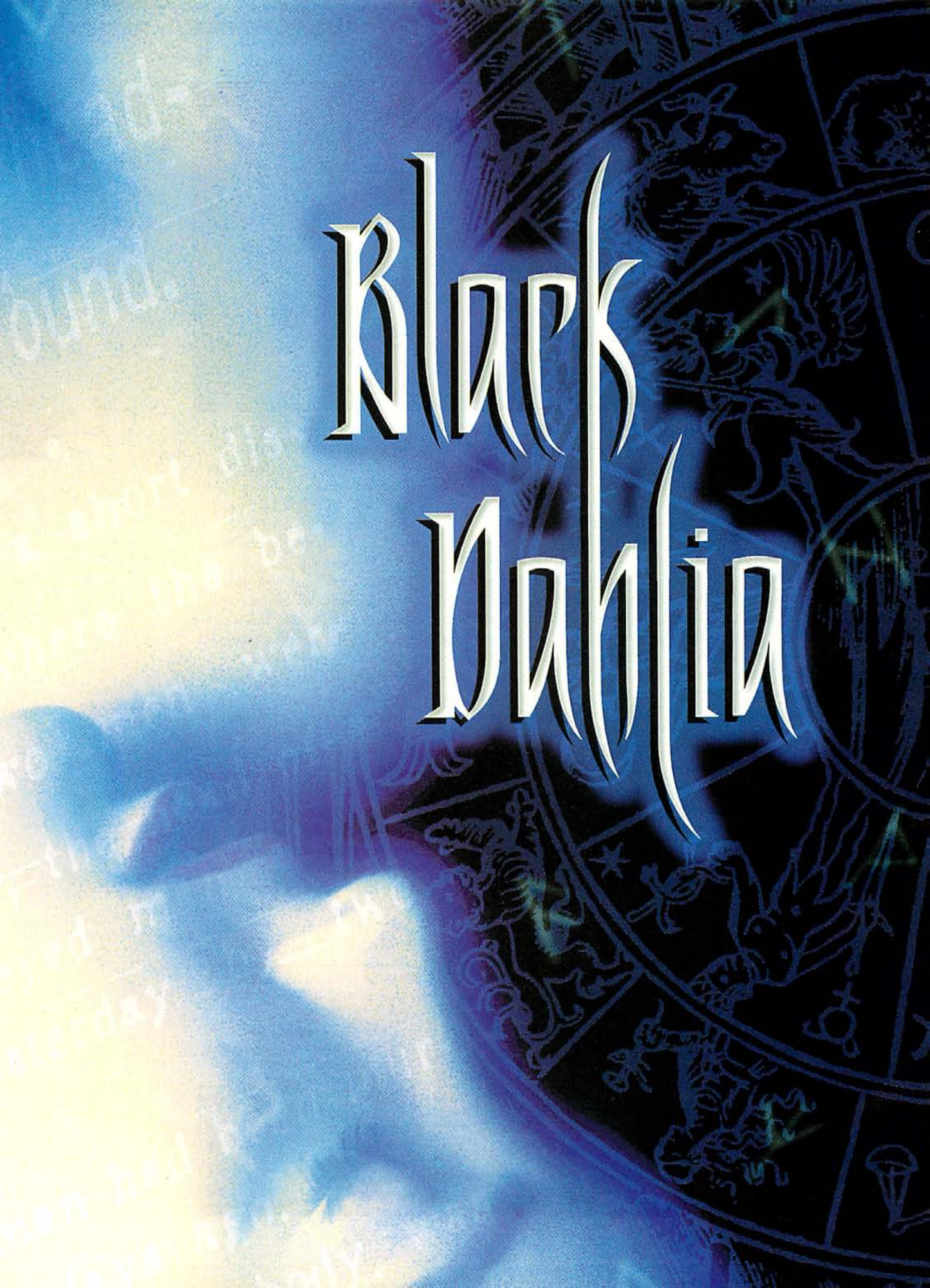
• It's tough to please the Queen of the Mosquibees; that trial by vicious metal balls is tough. Stand right by one of the doors to avoid the balls and go into Aggressive mode. While you'll still get bounced around a bit, you'll be relatively safe and you can attack the balls that bound by until you bust one open for a key. The door containing the blowtron is randomized so keep trying until you find the right door and satisfy the Queen.

APPEAL: Anyone who savors a rich, thoroughly satisfying gaming experience.

PROS: Lush graphics in a constantly inventive world brimming with life; perfect blend of adventure gaming and platform-style action; subquests and gameplay tightly woven into plot.

CONS: Awkward camera angles can occasionally complicate play.

CG RATED


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DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Sunken Treasure

ATLANTIS Is a Beautiful, Fantasy-based Adventure That Nearly Drowns in Its Own Flaws

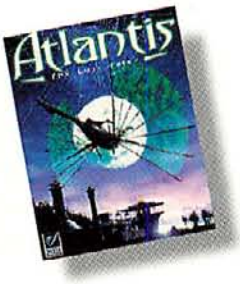
by Petra Schlunk



FROM SOHO DOWN TO BRIGHTON In ATLANTIS, you'll play a version of pinball using a mouse instead of a ball.

Considering the current rage for semihistorical adventure games (CRYSTAL SKULL, TITANIC, THE LAST EXPRESS, VERSAILLES), it's not surprising that an adventure game should come along that capitalizes on ancient legends. Such a game is ATLANTIS: THE LOST TALES, by Cryo Interactive Entertainment, which explores a fantasy-based lost civilization of Atlantis.

In ATLANTIS, you play the part of Seth, a young man on his way to Atlantis' palace to become a companion to the queen. He arrives as the queen is being kidnapped and must discover who is behind her abduction. In his subsequent adventures, he unravels a monstrous plot involving the royal consort's attempt to gain power through the unleashing of a dangerous source of knowledge. He must be stopped, and our hero, of course, is the one who must do it.



Price: $49.95
Minimum System Requirements: P90 or better, Windows 95/NT4 or DOS, 16MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM, SVGA-graphics, Sound Blaster or compatible sound card, 1MB video RAM.
Multiplayer Support: None.
Designer: Cryo Interactive Entertainment
Publisher: Cryo Interactive Entertainment
Paris, France
(800) 468-3775 (U.S. number)
www.cryo-interactive.fr
Reader Service #: 327

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

ATLANTIS offers an immersive environment with a simple point-and-click interface. As Seth, in a first-person perspective, you can smoothly turn around to survey the world. Various cursors appear when you can move somewhere, initiate conversations, and pick up objects. By selecting objects from your inventory, you can click them on appropriate places or people to solve the game's puzzles.

Although you can turn around easily (looking up or down as needed), movement forward is extremely slow, even if you bypass the animated motion. Also, unfortunately, you often must be facing in exactly the right direction to find the movement arrow. There are "action puzzles," such as escape sequences, in which you have to move so quickly that any error or time lost in finding the correct movement arrow (at any point in these sequences) results in Seth's demise. The necessary precision and timing make solving these puzzles very difficult for the DRAGON'S LAIR impaired.



HEY, BIG BOY Our hero, Seth, onboard a flying barge. He's man enough to wear a miniskirt.

To add insult to injury, after you die, you often regress five minutes or more in the game. This means you must replay large parts of the game just to get back to the difficult action sequence (usually only to fail again). The claw marks on the sides of my monitor are a mute testament to the needlessly frustrating work involved in solving such puzzles.

HELP! SAVE ME!

Making replays even more exasperating is the fact that there is no way to selectively save your game. ATLANTIS automatically saves it, but only at somewhat randomly predetermined points. Sometimes your game is saved only after several long sequences of moving and puzzle solving; sometimes it is saved more frequently, obviating the need to replay much of the game if you fail or when you return after leaving. An automatic save upon quitting, to avoid replaying long sequences on resuming the game, would have been a considerable improvement.

The way objects are used in the game is also frustrating. Sometimes you must place a new object in your inventory before you can do anything else; the rest of the time, the object either automatically ends up in your inventory or you can turn and use it nearby without having to place it in your inventory first. This haphazard approach makes for some tense moments in the game—in particular, when you must pick up an object and quickly turn to use it on someone or something. You can waste precious moments (and ATLANTIS can be very unforgiving in this aspect of gameplay) trying to turn when you can't or trying to place something in your inventory when you don't need to.

Conversations are similarly inconsistent in nature. Sometimes they are automatic, sometimes you have to click on someone to start talking or to discuss some topic, and sometimes you actually have to click on someone in your inventory (if they're traveling with you) before you can talk to them.

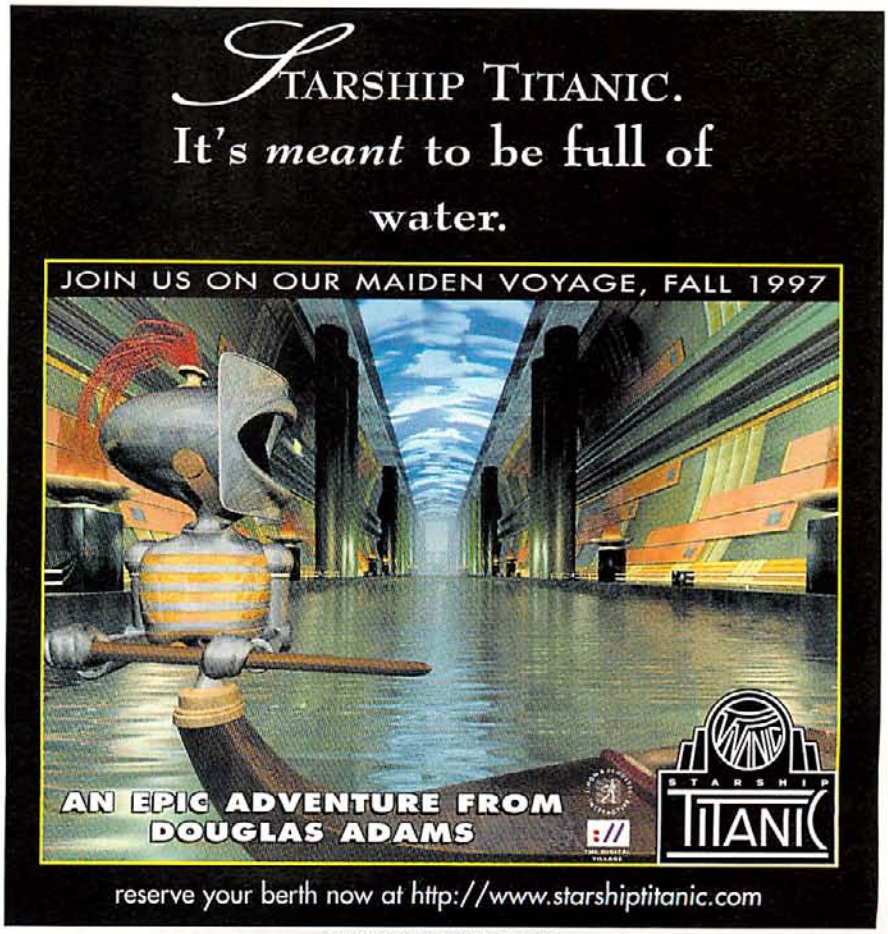
The puzzles in ATLANTIS vary greatly. The predominant puzzle element is figuring out what you must do or where you must go next. This



Hey, Tarzan!

Early in the game, there is a difficult escape puzzle involving two ambushes by the tavern.

Here's the solution: After jumping out of the palace window, head toward town and climb up the stairs outside a nearby house. Find the flowerpot and toss it just in front of the guard as he moves in the alley below. Enter the inn and speak with Lascoyt until Meljanz appears. Immediately after, turn left, go forward, left again, and up the stairs. (You have to be really fast or you'll get creamed.) At the top of the stairs turn left, move forward, and turn left again, all the while looking down. Use your knife on the rope and then click on Meljanz to grab the rope, swing down, kick Meljanz, and leave the inn.



CIRCLE READER SERVICE #251

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Actual game screen shots

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FANTASY ISLAND The highlight of ATLANTIS is the incredibly beautiful graphics, which almost make up for the often flawed gameplay.

game is relentlessly linear, and traveling through the world is exceedingly time-consuming: It can take a lot of time to determine what to do next. Other puzzles involve helping Seth escape or avoid deadly encounters, either through moving along predetermined paths or through finding and using objects, or through both. Some simple puzzles involve finding the right object with which to open a door, to climb through a window, to show someone, and so on. The remaining puzzles are games: sliding-block puzzles and puzzles that require you to place elements in some correct order. Often you don't get much in the way of hints and you can spend a lot of time on these little problems. Still, these are often fun, and you have plenty of time or chances to solve them.

IS BEAUTY ITS OWN REWARD?

ATLANTIS is a stunningly beautiful game with superb animation sequences. The storyline is also fine, displaying low-key humor to liven things up en route to the predictable ending. The game's conversations are often entertaining—even taking into account the sometimes (perhaps unintentional) hilarity of the voices themselves and the occasional puerile comment. While you can use subtitles, there are sequences where important information is conveyed without subtitle translation. The music ranges from eerie to hopping and avoids being overly intrusive or repetitive.

Besides the game's other shortcomings, ATLANTIS has another major flaw (at least it did on my system): frequent system lock-ups. I gave up counting when I ran out of expletives (and that's saying something). I had experienced well over 20 crashes long before the end of the game. To exacerbate things, it takes forever to load the game; you must load it from the first CD, and only then can you put in the CD on which you're currently playing. Very annoying.

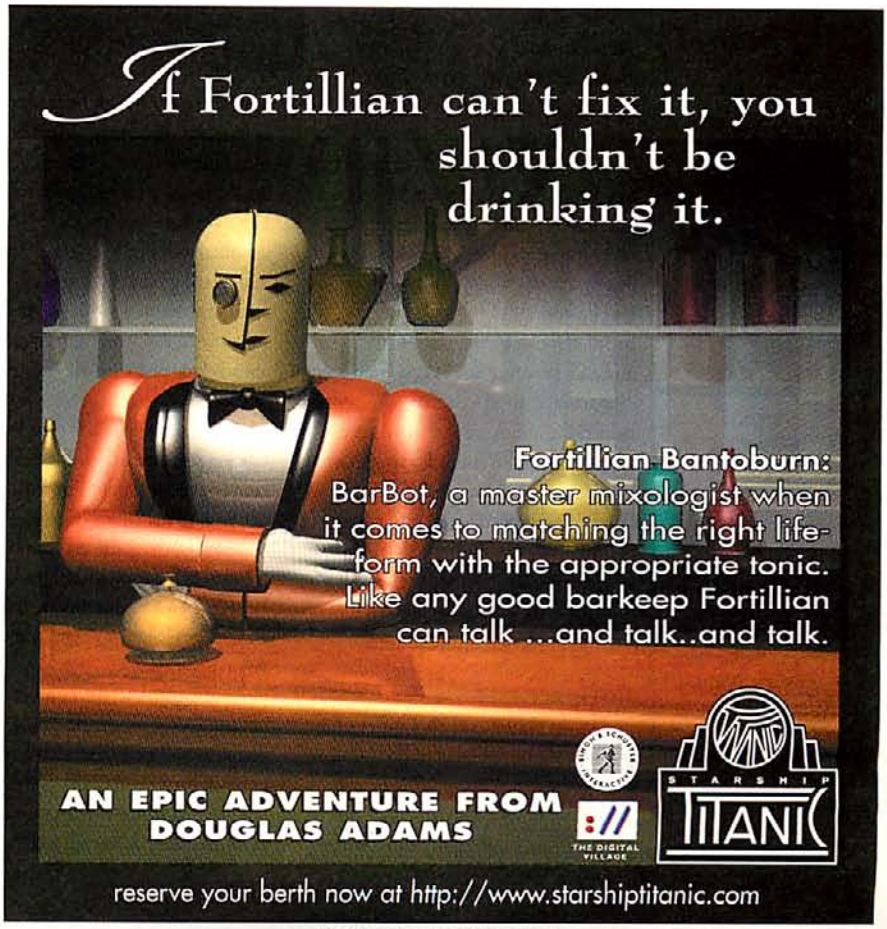
ATLANTIS is a tragically flawed, but otherwise enjoyable, humorous, and supremely beautiful game. If you can stand the frequent lock-ups, the endless replaying of long sequences, and the puzzles with difficult timing elements, there is a reward for your efforts. If you get easily frustrated though, give this product a miss.

APPEAL: Adventure gamers who have the patience to deal with its many flaws, or gamers who want to show off a great monitor.

PROS: Superb graphics, good puzzles, and a strong storyline.

CONS: An auto-save "feature" that forces replaying of long game sequences; very slow movement; frequent crashes make playing the game frustrating.

CG RATED



DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Not Feisty

Betrayal in Antara Tells a Good, Strong Tale, But It's Not Quite Krondor

by Petra Schlunk



SHADDAP ALREADY Exhausting the many conversational options with the people you meet is a must to solve the main quest in Betrayal in Antara.

Several years ago, fantasy writer Raymond E. Feist teamed up with Dynamix to create one the greatest role-playing games of all time, Betrayal at Krondor, a game with a depth of storytelling that was unparalleled in its time. After many delays and false starts, Sierra has finally produced a follow-up to this landmark game, Betrayal in Antara. Although this is *not* the sequel to Krondor (that honor belongs to the upcoming Return To Krondor, which Feist is now developing with 7th Level), Betrayal in Antara is a strong spiritual descendent of that classic, drawing heavily on its predecessor's game engine and emphasis on storytelling.

Antara's long tale is told in nine chapters, beginning near a small town in a land called Ramar. An innkeeper's son, Aren, rescues a young nobleman from a deadly attack through the use of heretofore unsuspected magical abilities. A friend of the nobleman dies in the ambush, however, so the two youngsters embark on a quest to learn the meaning behind the attack, as well as to find a magic teacher for Aren. They join forces with a young huntress and quickly become embroiled in political intrigue of enormous scope. Suspected of kidnapping a royal consort, they must split forces and discover what is at the root of the conspiracies within the empire.



Price: $54.95
Minimum System Requirements: Windows 3.1 or Windows 95, 486DX4/100 (P90 or better preferred), 16MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM, Windows-compatible sound card with DAC.
Multiplayer Options: None.
Designer/Publisher: Sierra On-Line, Inc. Bellevue, WA (206) 644-4343
www.sierra.com
Reader Service #: 328

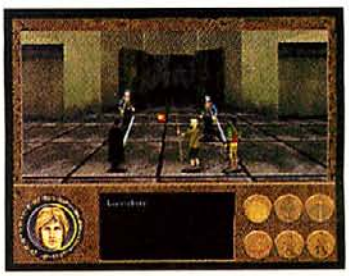
INTERFACE LIFT

Antara's point-and-click interface is virtually identical to that of Betrayal at Krondor, but with a graphic facelift. The game is played in the first-person perspective, and the party can travel in this view, using the mouse or keyboard, or in an overhead map view. The world map indicates your current goal for solving the main quest within each chapter. However, the game's many side quests are often well worth solving. It pays to retread old ground in new chapters to see if new quests appear, but retracing steps over a vast world also extends the already long play time enormously.

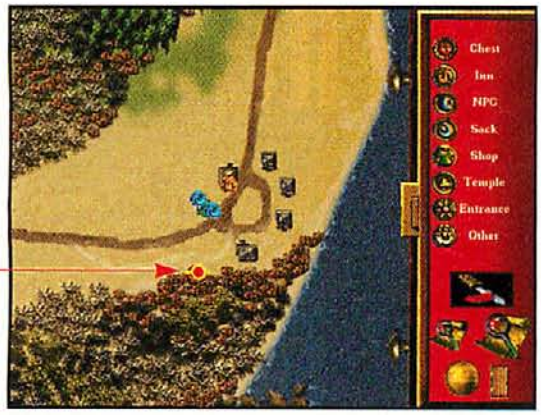
Of course, to get anywhere in the game, you have to talk to everyone. Clicking on people generally calls up a conversational window from which you can pick topics. Many conversations are recorded by the game and can be recalled in the game's "flashback mode." Be wary of relying on this too heavily, though, as many important game points go unrecorded.

As in Krondor, the number of adventurers in your party varies from chapter to chapter. Fortunately, when characters move in or out of the party, you have a chance to rearrange everyone's inventory. Although a character's basic attributes of strength, health, and stamina never change, characters improve their skills (such as melee and lockpicking) through use. Skills have maximum levels that increase slowly from chapter to chapter, so your party can keep pace with new challenges. In theory, skills also improve through study, but the only ones that reliably do this are Aren's spell skills.

Aren is the only magic-user in your party and his only combat weapons,



FACE OFF During combat, Aren shoots off a Lavasphere, in the hopes of injuring several opponents at once.



You Are Here

BETRAYAL IN ANTARA's excellent automap shows nearby buildings and landmarks that you've explored. If you set the game to mark important items automatically, it will note where you have found chests, NPCs, inns, stores, and more. Some of the objects in the world (like buried treasure caches) do not appear on the automap, but you can make additional notes on the map manually.



TELL ME ANOTHER ONE Between chapters and at the end of the game, action is played out by "reading" the pages of a book.

other than a staff, are his increasingly powerful spells. He starts with no spell skills, but learns them (20 in all) through combat, from books, and from talking with, and helping, others. When Aren becomes adept enough in several spell skills he can often research new spells. The game does a good job of automatically researching new spells.

BATTLE WEARY

There are hundreds of combats in ANTARA. You can prepare in advance if you can see the enemy or when you get a warning of an ambush ahead. Other combats spring on you by surprise, so your party should always be prepared. During combat, characters can use items in their inventory to heal others, or to improve their weapons, skills, or defenses. Using most inventory objects does not prevent characters from moving, resting, casting spells, or attacking in the same turn.

Combat takes place on a grid and provides new challenges (requiring new tactics) as the game progresses. There is also an optional autocombat feature. Early in the game, it is important that you attempt to capture and kill all foes, so that all their loot (including food and money) is collected. Later, defensive spellcasting becomes critical to protect characters from near annihilation by powerful archers or spellcasters. The difficulty setting of the game influences how difficult combat will be. If your party gets massacred, the game's excellent automatic save feature allows you to try again.

ALL STEAK, NO SIZZLE

Even for fans of KRONDOR, BETRAYAL IN ANTARA takes a long time to get into. The world is dark and dreary-looking, the characters and their voices are not particularly interesting, the music is uninspired, and the interface feels dated and often counterintuitive. If you hang in there, however, the game does grow on you, and the story is sturdy enough—especially with its numerous side quests—to keep things from getting too bogged down. The incremental increases in combat challenges and the slow, but consistent, acquisition of better spells, armor, and weapons also serve to keep the game moving. Nevertheless, BETRAYAL IN ANTARA is a very long game, and is made more so by the slow combat system.

For those who found KRONDOR too reading-intensive, ANTARA offers little improvement, although the reading between chapters is spread out over a series of pages in a book. Sadly, there is no real ultimate bad guy (for whom you are presumably honing your skills) to fight at the end. In fact, the last chapter's combats are almost ludicrously easy compared to those in the previous chapters. Despite this failing, the "cheese screen" at the end of the game (your reward for running through the maze) is good, if a bit long, and it ties up the story very nicely.

One further problem with BETRAYAL IN ANTARA is a bug that prevents your party from entering the last chapter (chapter 9) in the game if it performed all the side quests in chapter 5. As of this writing, there is no patch for this and gamers should look for such a patch or avoid the few side quests in that chapter.

Overall, ANTARA is a fair-to-middling role-playing game that lovers of KRONDOR should enjoy, but others probably won't. While it is disappointing that this game is not a step forward—as it only serves up a heaping helping of MOTS (more of the same)—at least it's not a step backward in this stagnant genre, and it does offer a rich story and lots of rewards for extra efforts taken to solve everything the game world offers.

APPEAL: Traditional RPGers who loved BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR, and others who enjoy a (very) long, story-rich, role-playing adventure.

PROS: A fine automap; interesting spell system; numerous side quests; and a long, involved story.

CONS: Lengthy and extremely slow combat; a cumbersome interface, an overly large world, dreary graphics, and uninteresting heroes divest ANTARA of much of its potential charm.

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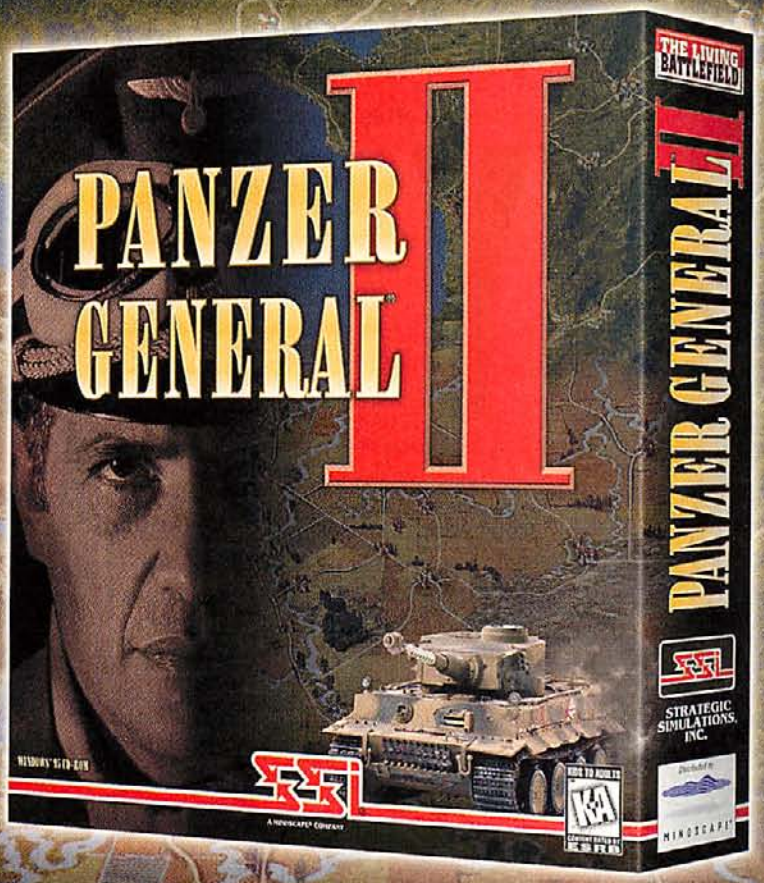
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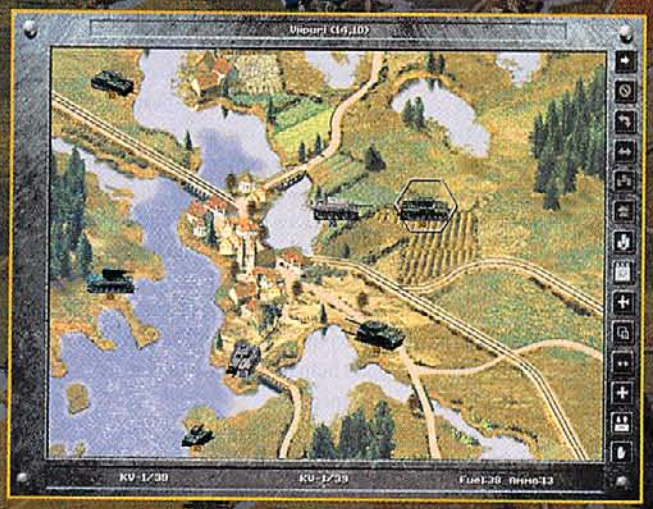
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DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Museum Piece

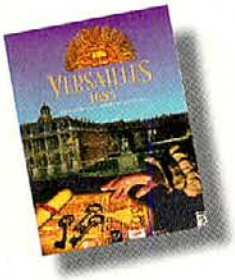
VERSAILLES 1685's Gameplay Is Staler Than a Week-old Baguette

by Robert Coffey

You really want to like a game that tries as hard as VERSAILLES 1685. A painstaking re-creation of Louis XIV's palace, with loads of historical infotainment and outstanding graphics and music, should make a prestige product. It's sad that with all its attention to detail VERSAILLES overlooked one little thing: gameplay. That and some nagging technical problems keep VERSAILLES 1685 from being as rich an experience as the palace itself.



PICTURE PERFECT Stunning reproductions of more than 200 pieces of classic artwork fill the virtual palace and are best enjoyed in the game's tour mode.



Price: $49.95
System Requirements: Windows 95 or DOS 5.0, 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM (16MB RAM for Win 95), 2MB hard-disk space (100MB recommended), VESA 1.2-compatible or DirectX 3-compatible video card with 256 colors, 4x CD-ROM drive, Sound Blaster-compatible or DirectX 3-compatible sound card, mouse. ***Macintosh Requirements:*** 68030 processor, 8MB RAM, 2x CD-ROM drive, System 7.1 or later, Sound Manager 3.0.
Multiplayer Support: None.
Designer: Cryo Interactive
Publisher: Interplay
Irvine, CA (714) 553-6678
www.interplay.com
Reader Service #: 330

LOUIE, LOUIE

As a court lackey in King Louis XIV's opulent château, you are charged by a superior to ferret out the villain threatening to blow up the castle at nightfall. Luckily, the would-be terrorist tends to leave all manner of political screeds and convoluted clues to his identity about the palace. Play is divided into seven acts, determined by the various rituals and ceremonies that defined the day-to-day life of the king.

The highly ritualized world of Louis XIV unfolds in lush, if awkwardly animated, cut-scenes. Indeed, the game's emphasis on historical accuracy colors every aspect of VERSAILLES. Every room of the palace is richly illustrated and simply staggering in its level of detail. Right-clicking and moving your mouse provides a smooth-scrolling, 360-degree view, which allows you to take in the richness of the ceiling frescoes and the ornate gilt of the apartment doors with equal ease. You can readily access historical data about the palace and the court; and a soundtrack of beautiful, French baroque music accompanies your movements through the château.



PARLEZ-VOUS ANGLAIS? To succeed in VERSAILLES 1685 you'll have to talk to, and eavesdrop on, great big wig-wearing courtiers like this clown.

The most noteworthy feature of VERSAILLES is that it reproduces more than 200 works of art. Though not quite up to the standards of art museum-issued CD-ROMS, the quality is truly commendable and best enjoyed apart from the action in the game's tour mode.

DELIVERY BOY

It's just too bad that the actual *game* didn't get as much attention as the wallpaper patterns when VERSAILLES 1685 was designed. The plot fails to gather any steam, the voice acting is pedestrian, and the skimpy puzzles—with one notably obscure exception—are unlikely to challenge anyone. Everything happens in

response to "trigger" events: Finding a rope in a chapel lets you talk to a priest once you exit, then reenter, the room. Triggers are tolerable, but those in VERSAILLES often make no sense: Why, for instance, can I pull aside some curtains only *after* I talk to another courtier? Has talking to this guy magically pulled out some invisible nails fastening the curtains to the wall? Worse, most of the gameplay centers around errand-running, to the extent that the NPCs actually start asking you to fetch them lunch.

Owners of S3 video cards (practically anything with the words *Diamond* or *Stealth*) can expect some daunting technical problems when they try to run VERSAILLES in Windows 95. You'll need to download the latest drivers for your card, and even then it probably won't work. The DirectX drivers on the game's CD-ROM are no help. Downloading the latest DirectX drivers from Microsoft's site got the game to run, albeit jerkily, but it was then prone to crashing. After hours of fiddling with accelerator speeds, drivers, and voodoo rituals, I finally gave up and ran the game without incident in DOS.

A good interactive history lesson, VERSAILLES 1685 does a commendable job of re-creating the splendor of the palace. But as a game...well, it's a good interactive history lesson.



NICE PLACE YOU GOT HERE VERSAILLES re-creates the lush rooms of the palace in loving detail. Hmm...wonder how much a summer sublet would run?

APPEAL: History buffs more concerned with historical accuracy and beauty than gameplay.

PROS: Lovely re-creation of Versailles; outstanding graphics, particularly in the representation of art; beautiful baroque soundtrack; lots of easily accessed historical data.

CONS: Uninspired, unchallenging, errand-running gameplay; some big-time bugs with certain video cards; plot limps along without building momentum.

CG RATED

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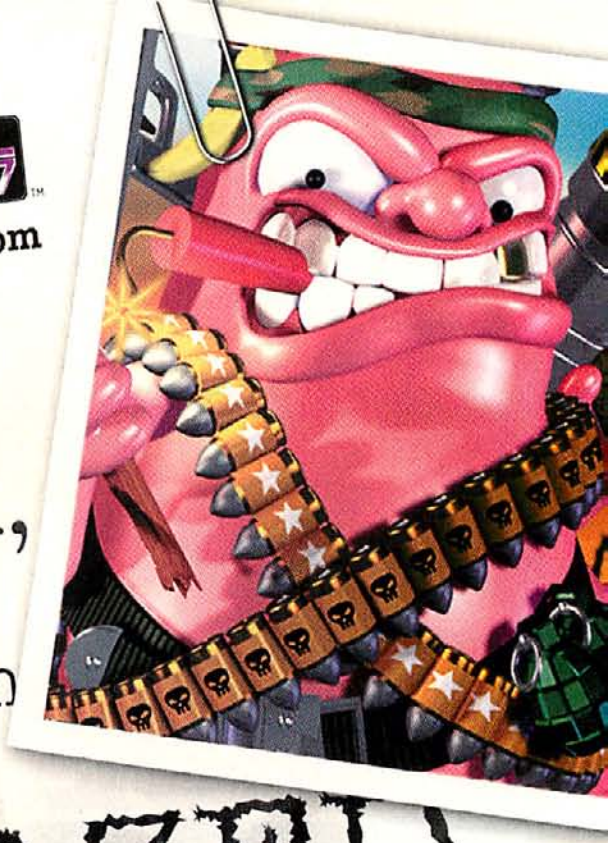
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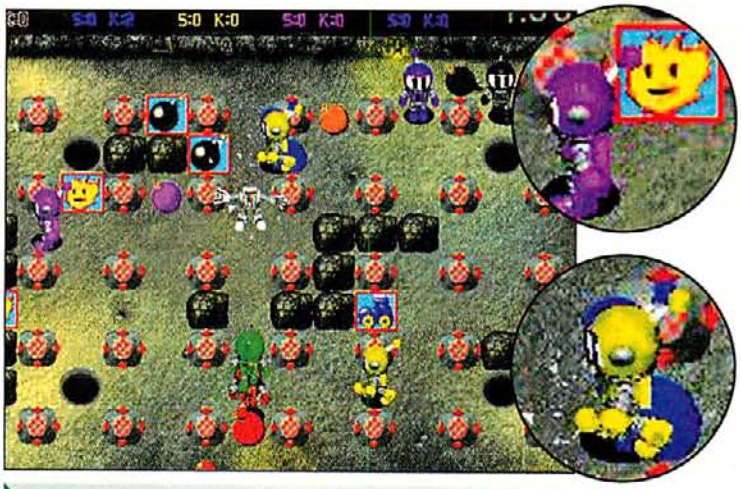
The cult classic is back!

Bombs Away

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Not a Complete Bomb, but Not a Complete BOMBERMAN, Either

by Kelly Rickards



KA-BOOM! ATOMIC BOMBERMAN has translated much of the fun of the console version over to the PC, but doesn't quite get everything right.

BOMBERMAN will surely be known as one of the greatest console multiplayer game series in history. It has appeared, in one form or another, on several different platforms, including the NEC Turbographics-16, Nintendo GameBoy, Super Nintendo Entertainment System, and Sega Saturn. And, later this year, it will appear on the Nintendo 64.

Although the series has collectively sold millions of copies over the years, BOMBERMAN is just now being ported to the PC. I have played just about every game in the series and I am a rabid fan of all the console BOMBERMAN games. Although ATOMIC BOMBERMAN for the PC has the general look and gameplay of the Hudson Soft classic, this game turns out to be quite a different BOMBERMAN than I'm accustomed to.

BOMBASTIC TALES

The original BOMBERMAN was designed in Japan by Hudson Soft, and the game adheres to the Japanese style of presentation and visual concepts (with cutesy, big-headed characters; bright, pastel colors, yadda, yadda), which I happen to like. ATOMIC BOMBERMAN was designed in the U.S. by Interplay and has a more American look and feel to it. The game now has rendered characters (as opposed to the previously hand-drawn Bombermen) and corny catch phrases like "cha-ching" and "sssmokin" when you blow up barriers and other players. As a B-MAN purist, I thought these changes were about as appealing as a bone marrow transplant, but the average PC user may now find the game less annoying than it was in its original Japanese state.

In a nutshell, the object in BOMBERMAN is to destroy all the other players on the grid with your bombs, plain and simple. The last one standing earns a win and the first player to accumulate three wins conquers that round. Power-up items enable players to increase their speed, increase blast range, kick or throw bombs, drop multiple bombs, and much more.

BAD DUBBING

I have two main gripes with this version. Let me start off by saying that the main appeal of the console version of BOMBERMAN is its party element. It's the perfect game to get a bunch of your friends together, plop down in front of the TV and blast each other to smithereens while ingesting soda and popcorn and talking trash. This is what BOMBERMAN is all about and, sadly, that crucial group experience is lost in the PC version (I guess that's why it's called the Personal Computer), which, to be fair, is not Interplay's fault. A multiplayer game can be played through either a LAN, modem, or serial network, and four players can squeeze together and play on a single screen via the Gravis GrIP, but it's just not the same.

The second problem I have with the game deals with its attempts at humor. *Everything* you blow up has an annoying canned sound effect. This is one of those games that beats you over the head with its "Isn't this game funny" rib pokes and knee slaps. I got tired of it in 10 seconds and I'm sure you will too.

This game also lacks the one-player story mode (present in other BOMBERMAN games), which further segregates this PC game from its console brethren.

The saddest thing about all of this is, ATOMIC BOMBERMAN could have been a much better representative of the series. This is not a bad game, by any means, and it's still fun, but unfortunately, its not really BOMBERMAN.

APPEAL: Fans of multiplayer arcade games.

PROS: Multiplayer pyrotechnic mayhem; lots of multiplayer levels and cool power-ups.

CONS: This game bastardizes the series; much of the appeal and well-honed gameplay of the Japanese console games didn't make the boat ride over the Pacific.

CG RATED ★★★



Price: $49.95
Minimum System Requirements: IBM or 100-percent compatible Pentium 90, 16MB RAM, 40MB free hard-disk space, 2x CD-ROM drive, local bus or PCI SVGA-graphics video card, Sound Blaster or 100-percent-compatible sound card, Windows 95 with DirectX 3.0 recommended; supports gamepad, joystick.
Multiplayer Support: Modem, LAN, serial network, Gravis GrIP.
Designer: Interplay
Publisher: Interplay
Irvine, CA
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Reader Service #: 331



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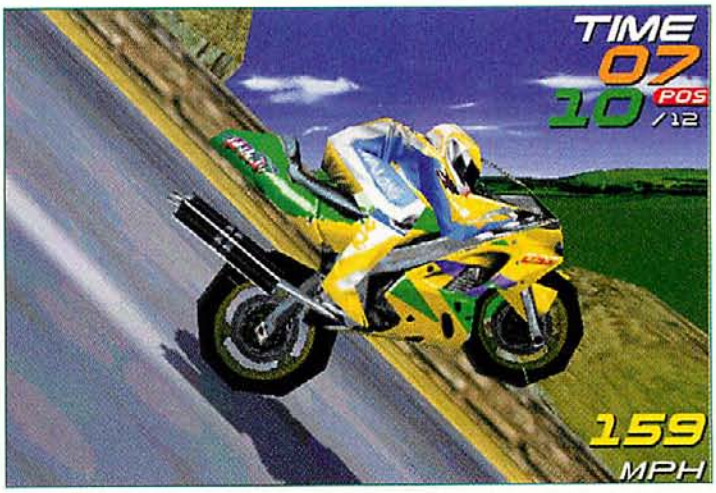
CIRCLE READER SERVICE #073

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Hell on Wheels

EA's Fun, New Two-Wheeler Has Speed to Burn

by Gordon Goble



WICKED WHEELIE MOTO RACER looks great, but also has lots of fun, realism, and speed madness.

It's a pretty safe bet you won't find many motorcycle racing games down at the local software store. Even if you do, you'll be hard-pressed to find any that actually treat the subject seriously; you know, a title that doesn't cater to the seemingly obligatory farm animal obstacles, bike gang references, and oil slicks.

That's all changing now. Electronic Arts has finally released the type of bike game that I have been anticipating since Accolade's interesting, but flawed, CYCLEMANIA. It may not be the motorcycle equivalent of INDYCAR RACING, but it's the most realistic approach the genre has ever seen: much like a two-wheeled NEED FOR SPEED.

BURNING RUBBER

MOTO RACER is the name, and unadulterated speed is the game. But you'll need more than just raw speed to succeed. Your best rides will be a result of four factors: raw reflexes and skill, experience, cornering awareness, and a smart pre-race choice of mechanical setup.

What else do you want from a racing game? How about eight unique tracks that run the gamut from dirt motocross to cityscape to roller coaster whirl through the English countryside—even a frightening tear atop the Great Wall of China? How about an admirable physics model that gives different rides on snow or dirt than on pavement, slows as you go uphill, and begs for authentic racing lines? Throw in a first-person view that jiggles you during tight corners and *heaves* you viciously up and down during a motocross jump and you've got one hell of a compelling product.

Though MOTO RACER events are relatively short (at less than five minutes each), they are amply exciting through any of the very workable onboard or chase perspectives. When you complete a course, expect a slick replay with multiple chase, lookback, and trackside cameras.

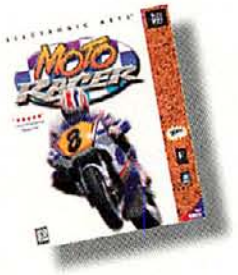
IT'S GOT THE LOOK

MOTO RACER's in-game graphics are likewise impressive. They're not perfect—hairline cracks are evident between scenery segments, and distance drawing is noticeably slow—but they're great otherwise. The 640x480 textured graphics are extremely sharp in the foreground, plentiful in the background, and sport a killer frame rate when they're run through a 3D accelerator. Don't be surprised to see low-flying aircraft, tunnels and bridges, all manner of structures, gorgeous backdrops, and much more go whizzing by.

The polygonal bikes are particularly stunning. They lean and pitch just when they should and their appearance is oh-so-detailed. Riders, meanwhile, move realistically and independently in their seats, twisting and turning and casting evil glances backward when bumped from behind or bouncing off the (sadly) non-interactive scenery. Completing a Moto Racing Championship opens all tracks to reverse racing. On the other hand, the "Pocket Bike" enticement simply gives all the competitors a tiny little motorcycle and is more silly than gratifying.

Game audio is crisp and imaginative throughout: Wonderfully apropos jazz, funk, and rock selections give way to high-pitched, yet throaty engine notes; authentic tire squeals; and positively painful brake yelps. Crashes, although deprived of break-apart machinery, do feature detached riders and smoke.

Fast, sensible menu screens with lots of flair, tons of user-definable options, and a thorough manual complete the picture, one that shows motorcycling on the PC much improved.



Price: $49.95
Minimum System Requirements: Pentium 90 (P133 recommended), Windows 95, 16 MB RAM, 5 MB hard-disk space (80MB recommended), 2x CD-ROM drive, 2 MB SVGA card, 8-bit or 16-bit sound card.
Multiplayer Support: IPX or TCP/IP network (2-8 players), NULL modem (2 players).
Designer: Delphine Software International
Publisher: Electronic Arts
San Mateo, CA
(800) 245-4525
www.mracer.com
Reader Service #: 332

APPEAL: Speed fanatics, bikers who have grown tired of the strict "arcade" approach, sim fans with a taste for two-wheeled adventure.

PROS: Extremely fast action and frame rates (with 3D card); semi-realistic feel; pretty graphics; good replay mode; and great sound.

CONS: Hairline cracks in the graphic engine and a slow draw of distant objects; some scenery is guarded by an invisible "wall"; senseless "Pocket Bike" bonus.

CG RATED ★★★★

INSANE

[3D CAR COMBAT]

Smashing into Stores this November!

The most twisted driving and shooting game ever created just packed its bags and hit the road — Paris, New York, Hong Kong, Antarctica, and beyond. With eight new levels in all, hidden areas, world landmarks to destroy, new weapons and killer combo-attacks — it's a whole new world to blow away! A monster hit for the PlayStation™ game console, Twisted Metal 2 for Windows® 95 is a direct port with a network play option that allows you to annihilate up to 8 friends in a single match. Also compatible with all Direct3D video accelerators.

TEEN T AGES 13+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PC CD ROM

Get ready. Get twisted. Drive Angry.







CIRCLE READER SERVICE # 086

Sony Interactive Studios America

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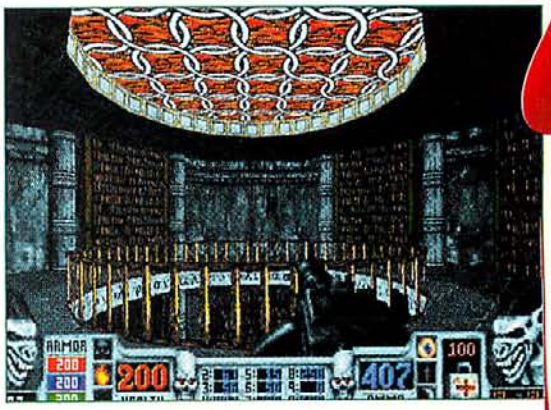
TWISTED METAL 2™

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Passage to Goreia

CRYPTIC PASSAGE Offers Decent Level Design at the Cost of Technical Problems

by Thierry Nguyen



LOVELY LIBRARY Levels like the Library, the Castle, and the Opera House feature very good-looking architecture.

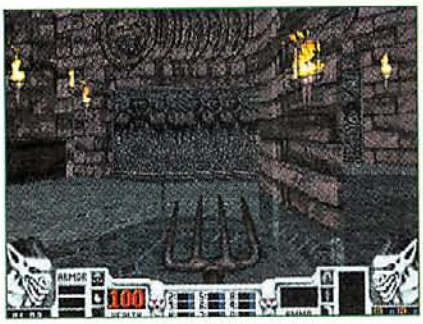
The 3D action-game genre is rife with enterprising gamers who want to take a crack at the design process, tearing apart games like DOOM and QUAKE to construct their own enemies, sounds, weapons, and levels. But while players crank out levels for free, some companies try to make a quick buck by gathering decent level designers, having them create levels, and selling the results as a retail package. WizardWorks is one of these companies, and its latest release is an add-on pack for BLOOD. Unfortunately, in its rush to release CRYPTIC PASSAGE, WizardWorks has created an aggravating error that cripples the product.

MORE BLOOD...

CRYPTIC PASSAGE takes place after BLOOD (naturally). In the storyline, the Cult has stolen the Carpathian Scroll, an artifact that will "upset the balance of world power." That's just the excuse you need to play 10 new single-player and four new multiplayer levels.

The levels themselves are nicely done. While the levels are not up to the quality of those done by id or Ritual (which helped make the original DUKE NUKEM 3D levels), they're at least nicer than, say, the QUAKE levels in the Q!ZONE disc. Rather than haphazardly slap some sectors around and drop in a few random monsters here and there, the designers have made their levels fit an architectural theme while still making them playable.

Instead of borrowing clichés from the movies, CRYPTIC PASSAGE turns to real life for inspiration and presents such locations as a library, a steamboat, an opera house, and a complete graveyard (as opposed to the random gravestone clusters found in other games). The levels are generally larger and focus more on realistic architecture and exploration. For enemy placement, the levels either feature large winding areas with sideways assaults or follow the "stacked-odds" school of design.



MORE MIRRORS THAN A FUNHOUSE Here we see the hall-of-mirrors effect, which makes certain levels almost unplayable.

...LESS FILLING

Unfortunately, new levels and a few new textures are all you're going to get in this pack. There are no new weapons, no new enemies, no new items. There isn't even a new boss—despite what you see on the box, you'll face two clones of the third-episode boss (Cerberus) in the final level.

The biggest flaw in this pack is the dreaded hall-of-mirrors effect. If you have 16MB of RAM or less, certain levels (Levels 5 and 9, in particular) exhibit severe hall-of-mirrors effects. Only on a machine with 48MB of RAM did the effect go away. This simply means that the level has a hard time loading textures when running out of RAM space. Sunstorm shouldn't have to take all the blame—this is also a BUILD engine limitation—but the designers should have taken the time to code the levels a bit tighter to ensure their playability, since a good number of gamers still have only 16MB of RAM.

If you liked BLOOD and don't mind blowing some cash, CRYPTIC PASSAGE may satisfy you for a while. The actual design is better than many of the Internet levels, but the execution is a bit sloppy. If you want more than just new levels and textures, wait until the PLASMA PAK is released.



Price: $29.95
Minimum System Requirements: Registered version of BLOOD, Pentium 75, DOS 6.2 or higher, 16MB RAM, 10MB hard-disk space, 4x CD-ROM drive, VGA graphics card, Sound Blaster-compatible sound card.
Multiplayer Support: Modem, serial connection, LAN, Internet (2-8 players).
Designer: Sunstorm Interactive
Publisher: GT Interactive New York, NY (212) 726-6500
www.gtinteractive.com
Reader Service #: 333

APPEAL: BLOOD fans looking for some good, new levels.

PROS: Good level design in terms of architectural aesthetics and themes; decent enemy placement design.

CONS: Nothing more than levels; HOM effect when played on a computer with 16MB of RAM or less.

CG RATED ★★★

BRUTAL

[ALL-TERRAIN RACING]

Blazing into Stores This November!







KIDS TO ADULTS
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PC CD ROM

These are the most treacherous motorcraft courses ever created. Test your stomach on a vehicle equal parts motocross bike and rocket as you scream across sun-drenched sea courses, tree-choked bayou swamps, and snow-covered slopes. TruePhysics™ 3D technology brings every whip turn and spin into gut-wrenching reality. A triumph for the PlayStation™ game console, Jet Moto for Windows® 95 features a network play option that enables you to race up to 20 friends simultaneously. Also compatible with all Direct3D video accelerators. Ride it. Feel it. Split some air.

Sony Interactive Studios America

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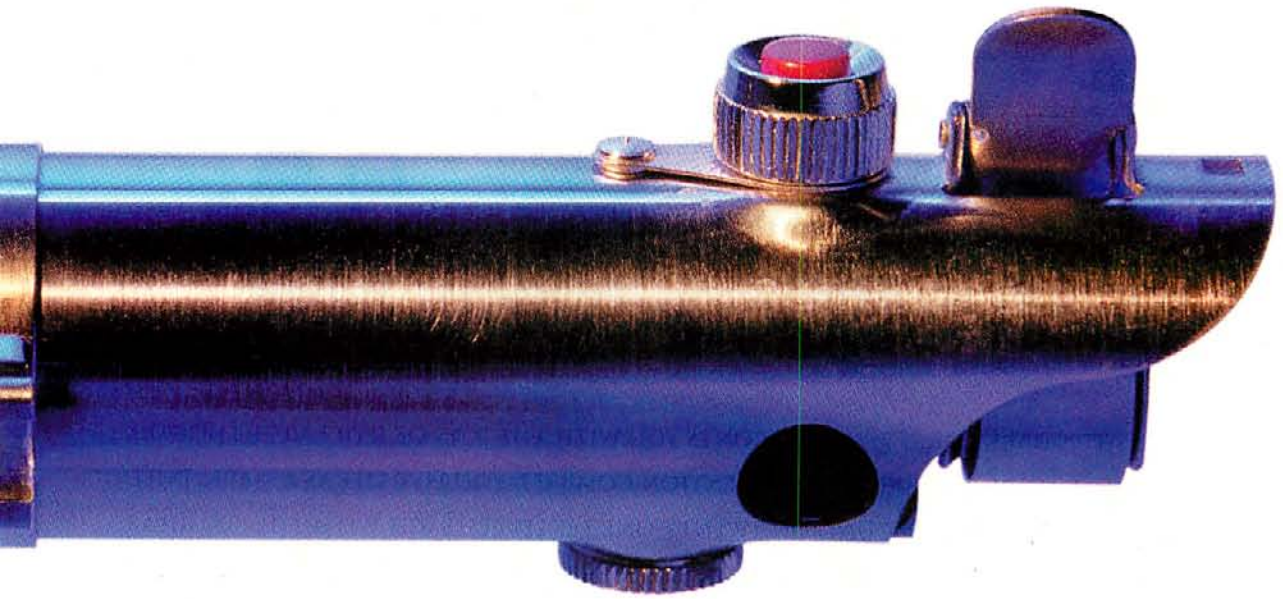
Jet Moto™

CIRCLE READER SERVICE #087



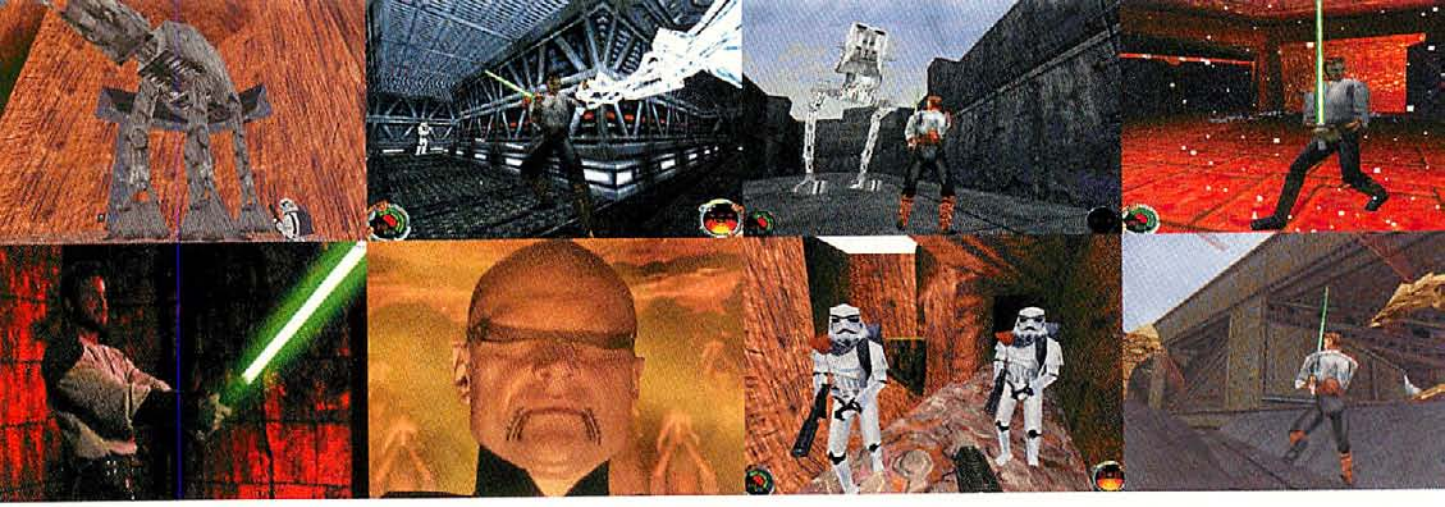
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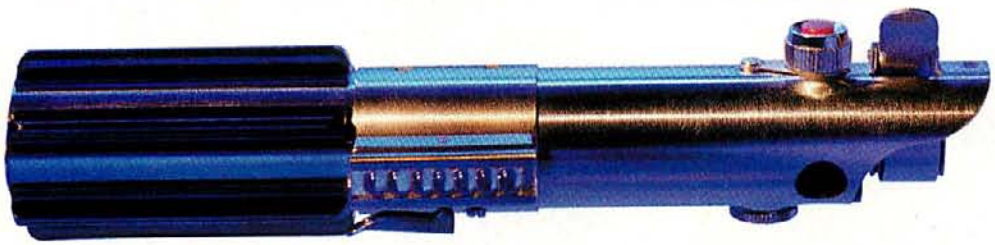
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DARK FORCES® II



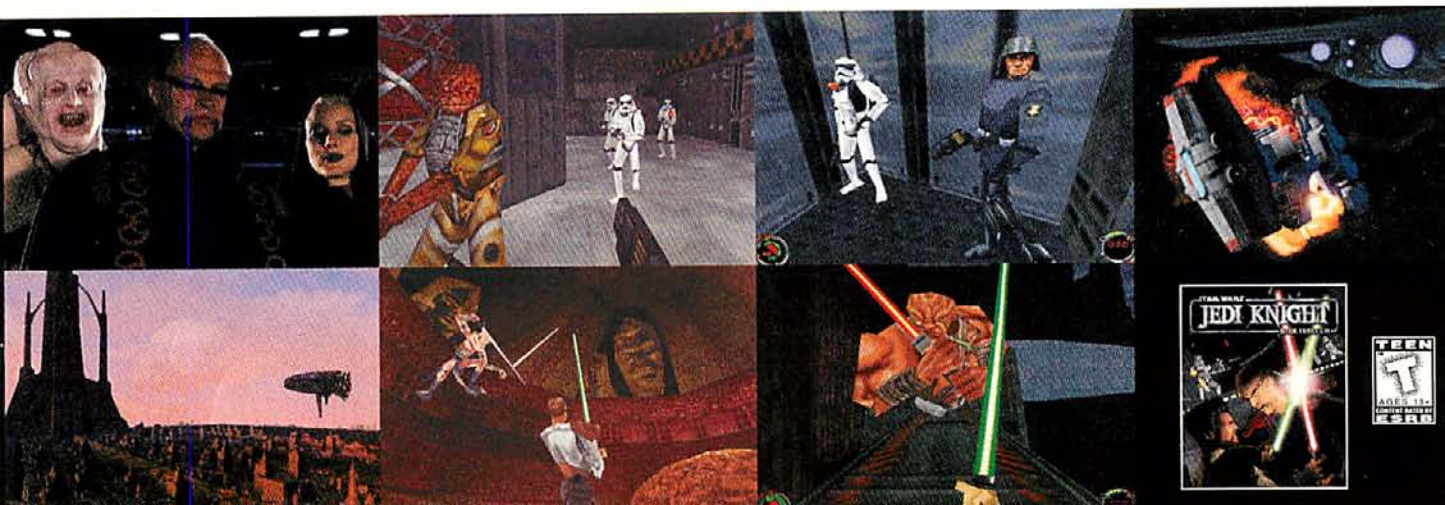
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #122

SPORTS

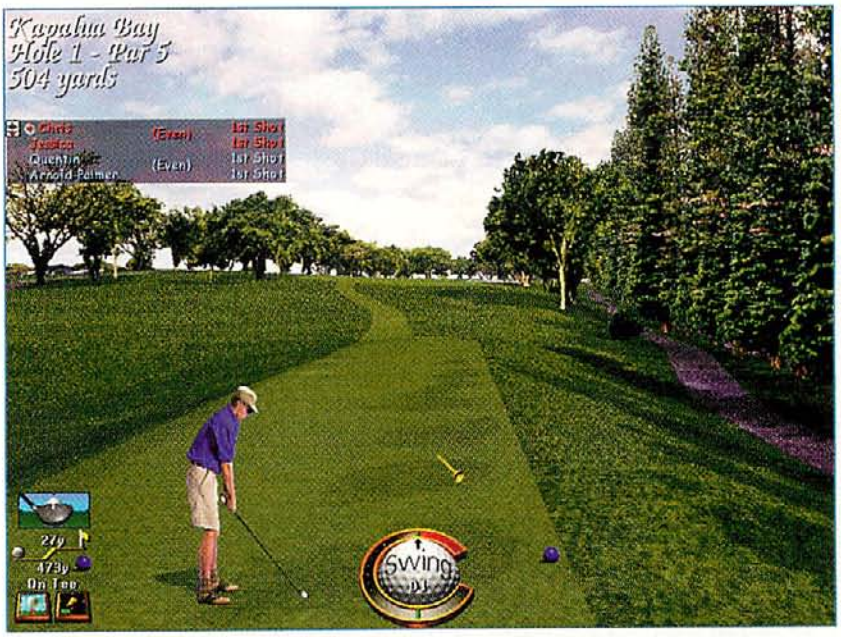
DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

CG CHOICE

Hotter Links

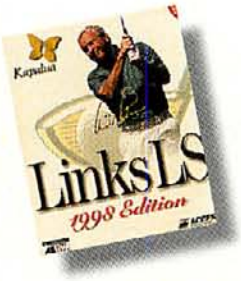
A Cartload of New Features Puts LINKS LS Back on Top

By Denny Atkin, Sr.



STROKE ME LINKS LS 1998 EDITION adds two new forms of play, including Alternate Shot and Scramble (shown here), to increase the already great gameplay.

Last year, LINKS LS dazzled golf simulation aficionados with its unprecedented realistic play, to say nothing of the ability to tee it up with legends like Arnold Palmer for match play. It had a few quirks, such as slow screen redraws and difficult-to-configure online play, but, overall, it was a top-notch product. The LINKS LS 1998 EDITION not only addresses its predecessor's difficulties, but adds more than 25 new features that make the game much more like really being on a golf course.



Price: $79.95
Minimum System Requirements: Pentium 90 or higher running Windows 95 or Windows NT 4.0, 16MB of RAM, 35MB of free hard-disk space (estimated) plus up to 30MB while running, 4x CD-ROM drive, video card with 1MB RAM capable of displaying 800X600 resolution in 32K colors, 8-bit sound card, mouse.
Multiplayer Support: Modem (2 players), LAN (1–8 players), Internet (1–8 players); each player needs the CD in all instances.
Designer: Bruce Carver
Publisher: Access Software, Inc.
Salt Lake City, Utah
(800) 800-4880
www.accesssoftware.com
Reader Service #: 336

The LINKS LS 1998 EDITION again features Arnold Palmer at his legendary Latrobe Country Club, plus Maui's famed Kapalua Village, Plantation, and Bay courses. Even though the courses are the same, the enhancements make the playing experience new once more.

WELL-MAINTAINED COURSE

LINKS LS 1998 offers amazingly detailed course graphics. Supported resolutions start at 800x600 and peak at 1600x1200, with up to 16.7 million colors supported. This wonderful lifelike clarity makes golf course details virtually pop out at you. The great visual sensations are enhanced by position-dependent 16-bit 3D stereo sound. Sounds pan across the stereo mix and seem to actually come from the appropriate part of the screen. In addition, a sound library editor lets you use any standard .wav files to add your own comments or sounds. *Beavis and Butthead Co Golfing*, anyone?

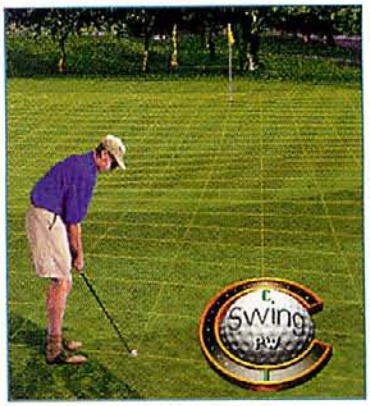
Very little has changed with LINKS LS' gameplay, which was already top-notch. Access has avoided the temptation to join the new "mouse swing" craze, instead relying on its proven three-click swing methodology. Ball flight and putting physics are top-notch, just as you'd expect on the real course.

The biggest play improvement is the elimination of one of the game's most annoying features—slow screen redraws. The game's "look-ahead" rendering starts drawing the next view in memory as soon as you make your shot. My 133MHz Pentium takes about 4–5 seconds to redraw, versus 10–15 seconds for the original LINKS LS. A 200MHz Pentium cuts that time to about 2–3 seconds.

While look-ahead rendering is my choice as the most significant gameplay improvement, and easily worth the price of the upgrade, there are other bells and whistles which make the 1998 edition an even better value. There are now six modes of play, including scramble and alternate shot, both new for 1998, as well as traditional favorites match play, stroke, skins, and best ball. I especially enjoyed trying the scramble format just to see how well the team could score with extra tries at the same shot. This also meant much less use of the Mulligan feature.

NEW VIEWS

Win 95 users will be happy to discover that LINKS LS 1998 is a true Windows 95 application—no more worrying about sound and video drivers. To take full



UNDER PRESSURE There is glory to be had in LINKS LS, but make a bad putt, and you'll face the ire of your partners on the green.



WINDOW WATCHER The new version has up to eight separate cameras that you can position around the main view.

advantage of the game's graphic enhancements and install the four included golf courses on your hard disk, you need 218MB of free space. I chose the 140MB installation that fully installed the game and left the four golf courses on the CD-ROM. Smaller installations are available, but you may have to forgo some bells and whistles.

As I began my first match, revisiting Latrobe and taking on Arnie once again, I discovered the game's new environmental animations, which make the simulated course feel much more alive. As I was lining up my very first shot, I suddenly noticed a blimp passing by in the background. Of course, I imagined that it was the Goodyear Blimp covering our big match! (It turned out to be the "Access Blimp.")

As the round unfolded, I later saw a jet going into the Pittsburgh airport and a hot air balloon floating by. Never a boring moment! In another round, remembering the first time I played at Kapalua's Bay course in real life, I decided to try adding the new haze and fog feature. It was truly realistic, and the waving flags and flapping noises reminded me of the constant trade winds. As one of my shots stopped near the water, I noticed reflections of trees and clouds dancing in the water, another new touch of realism.

The new player animations are also nice additions, with grimacing faces and golfer gyrations that really seem realistic following a missed shot. Remember, playing golf, whether in real life or simulated, is a series of misses, some less extreme than others. Very seldom does the ball actually find the hole until the putts get short.

You'll sometimes see your playing partners on the screen as you prepare to take your shot. This is especially realistic around the green. It may have been my imagination, but I am sure I could see Arnie looking unhappy as I rolled in a long putt.

Another great new feature is the use of "smart" cameras. Eight views are available and you can have them all open at once. Using 1024X768 or better resolution, you can watch your shot in the main screen on the bottom and surround it with camera views from Golfer Cam, Pin Cam, Green Cam, Landing Cam, and Putting Cam. You no longer have to obscure part of the main screen to open additional windows.

YOU GOT NEXT

Want competition? You can set up offline tournaments and keep them active over as long as you like. You can even challenge friend and computer opponents in the same tourney. Even more competition is out there via the Internet. You can compete with up to eight players.

While the game doesn't offer a course editor, Access avoids any chance of boredom by rolling out new courses and players on a regular basis. I can say from experience that avid golfers *constantly* change their equipment and explore new courses. *The Tour Player Series* is an ongoing package of new players and their home courses. (Arnie and Latrobe are just the beginning; the first expansion pack features Davis Love III.) *The Resort Series* includes golf courses, tours of the resorts and virtual clubhouses, and so on. For those of us who don't find ourselves in places like Hawaii nearly often enough, it's fun to experience them virtually. *The Celebrity Player Series* also adds excitement for stargazers, featuring famous personalities, including golfer animations, commentary, and video.

All in all, I remain a big fan of LINKS LS, and feel the 1998 enhancements are a big plus. The only hitch I encountered was with the Arnold Palmer animation. Occasionally there is a slight hiccup in his swing, and the sound timing is just a little off. Overall, though, with the excellent selection of camera views, the immersive environment, the realistic golf physics, and numerous other options, desktop golfers will not tire of this game for a long time.

APPEAL: All desktop golfers.

PROS: Faster screen redraws than in the '97 edition; easy Internet play options.

CONS: No course editor; high system requirements; inability to shift the player position on tees to add more aiming realism.

CG RATED

Online Play



In the original LINKS LS, multiplayer play was very difficult to set up. The new version supports Microsoft's DirectPlay, making it a snap to get up and running.

I was very nervous setting up my first Internet play venture, being more of a computer *user* than hacker. My opponent offered to be my host and it was a breeze. Once we were set up, the game progressed as if we were taking turns at the keyboard. The chat feature makes it easy to comment back and forth during the game play. Access offers matchmaking services on the LINKS LS Web site, and the game will soon be supported on NetPlayer. Access tosses a nice bone to beginners—there's an icon in the LINKS LS menu group that you can choose to show your IP address, necessary for Internet play.

After you find a game, which isn't really that tricky, it really does open up a world of fun competition. Because latency isn't an issue with golf games, there's virtually no limit to where your opponents can be located. My first try was a short game against my son, a nongolfer better known for his expertise in simulated aerial dogfights. Although not a golfer in real life, his mouse prowess taught me a lesson in cyber golf! Internet play gives any two people (up to eight) an endless source of real competition.

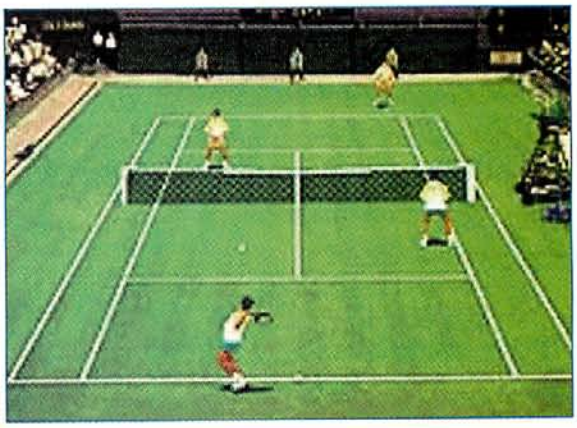
DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Play Two, Please

It Really Is Tennis, But We'll Wait for the Second Serve

by Terry Coleman

With baseball games turning increasingly to action fests, it's difficult to tell the home-run derbys from the real thing. With computer tennis games, you run into a similar problem: Most of them are little more than PONG with better graphics and a couple of player sprites for eye candy. TENNIS ELBOW tries very hard to be a true racket sport on your PC, but ends up as a product that would benefit from a new string job.



MY OWN PRIVATE WIMBLEDON The action actually resembles tennis more than PONG, and the graphics are better than shown here.

LET—FIRST SERVICE

The controls are fairly simple, once you get them configured—not the easiest thing to do. The graphics are somewhat dated as well (though they aren't as bad as the low-res screens shown here).

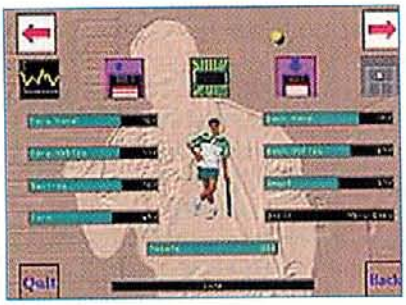
To avoid a problem with a squirrelly mouse, try using a joystick instead. It's a big disappointment that several gamepads don't work properly with the game: Specific support for the daisy-chaining ability of the Gravis or Microsoft Sidewinder would have made for better head-to-head play on the same computer. In any case, it's been a long time since a tennis product has been remotely playable via keyboard, as TENNIS ELBOW is; still, use a joystick to keep from going nuts.

The variety of shots and spins is pretty impressive: Slices, topspins, floaters, drop shots. You can hit a normal, safe, or attacking drive; angle the ball short; or even hit it deep to your opponent's corner. My favorite part of the game comes from the reasonably accurate depiction of lobs, both defensive and offensive (the dreaded *lob d'attaque*), which help to make playing doubles a different game than singles.

The usual attempts to model the slowness of clay, the sheer speed of grass, and the true bounce of hard courts are evident here. But TENNIS ELBOW, like its forebears, can't quite capture the nuances of different surfaces. Clay court impresario Thomas Muster (a recent No. 1 player) wins most of his titles on clay and avoids hard courts because they beat the dickens out of his reconstructed knees. In TENNIS ELBOW, however, you can have your Muster-style character banging away on cement with little worry. Likewise, your Pete Sampras type can serve and volley on slow, red clay with greater success than is possible in real life, because you don't suffer the constant sliding around you do on real dirt.



Price: $29
Minimum System Requirements: 486 DX2 processor, Windows, 8MB RAM, runs from CD (no hard-disk space required), SVGA graphics, Windows-compatible sound card; supports mouse and joystick.
Multiplayer Support: 1-4 IPX or modem.
Publisher: GOTO Software
rue de Croix, France
33-3-20-66-5500
www.tenniselbow.com
Reader Service #: 338



KILLER FOREHAND With the player profiles and point system, you decide if your character will be a net rusher or a baseline slugger.

NO CLEAN WINNERS

TENNIS ELBOW does have several nice touches, such as being able to play from the CD. The game has a decent learning curve and offers a variety of computer opponents. This isn't exactly the tennis equivalent of FRONT PAGE FOOTBALL, but having a 95-tournament world circuit does require that you manage your career like a real pro.

Nonetheless, you can't escape the feeling that we've been here before. Other tennis games—admittedly less attractive—had variety and role-playing elements years ago. In particular, TENNIS ELBOW tries hard to emulate the Amiga version of PRO TENNIS TOUR (1991, Ubi Soft), but falls short of the elegance and replayability of that game. It's a shame, too, that the controls for tennis simulations seem to have advanced so little in the past half-decade.

APPEAL: Mostly for die-hard McEnroes.

PROS: The only real tennis game on the market right now, with decent feel and variety.

CONS: Effects of different surfaces and role-playing elements need to be fleshed out; not much that's new.

CG RATED ★★★



CIRCLE READER SERVICE #261



The remaining 90% is subject to more extreme security measures.

Enter the military outfit U.S. officials deny even exists. This time, they're out to stop a maniacal terrorist with stolen nuclear weapons. At their disposal, heavily armed assault vehicles. Including a Super Apache helicopter Harrier jet and Abrams tank. An undeniably lethal arsenal. But when the alternative is global extinction, there's no such thing as overkill.

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NUCLEAR STRIKE

ELECTRONIC ARTS

CIRCLE READER SERVICE #261

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Franchise Player

BASEBALL MOGUL Is the Freshest Baseball Game in Years

by Jim Gindin

At first glance, this seems like just one more of the many text-based baseball simulations aimed at fans who simply aren't interested in joystick-twitching or watching an accurate representation of Albert Belle driving a fastball deep into the Chicago skyline. But while BASEBALL MOGUL is based completely on the numbers of the game, it offers a perspective different from the standard baseball simulation.

You portray one of Major League baseball's 28 general managers. Starting with the 1997 roster, you decide which players to keep and select a starting lineup and pitching rotation. As seasons progress, you trade players, bring up rookies from the minor leagues, set budgets, and vote yea or nay on new contract demands.

When the contract for a star player expires, an agent pops up onscreen, asking for, let's say, a five-year, $22.3 million deal. Either you sign that contract or the player becomes a free agent. There's no negotiation. How do you say no to Barry Bonds in San Francisco? Or Mo Vaughn in Boston? That's just one of the pressure-cooker decisions general managers make every year. Should your team run out of money, you can't sign new contracts and you can spend only the minimum on scouting and farm system development. Without good scouting, you're at a huge disadvantage during trades. Without a good farm system, you're completely dependent on trading to develop your roster. And without new contracts, Vaughn and Bonds are headed for free-agency anyway.

WE NEED A NEW TV CONTRACT

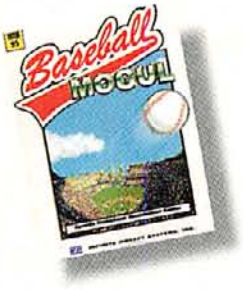
Your most crucial responsibility in MOGUL, naturally, is to keep your team above water financially. And in a market where salaries expand faster than Microsoft stock options, that often means trading your high-priced stars before they drag you into bankruptcy. It also means avoiding George Steinbrenner's favorite means of improvement: the free-agency list. Assembling a cast of All-Stars is easy, and that alone will carry a team into the playoffs. But a team with an $80 million payroll isn't going to stay assembled very long. And your fans aren't going to enjoy watching a couple of -easons of rebuilding from the division cellar.

Decisions like these give MOGUL a different feel from other baseball simulations. Success is measured by having the money, year after year, to field a highly competitive team. If Bonds' $11 million salary keeps you from assembling a decent pitching staff, you've got a tough decision to make. You also need to monitor your players' performance constantly, as top prospects don't always turn out to be great major-leaguers, and even stars dim with age.

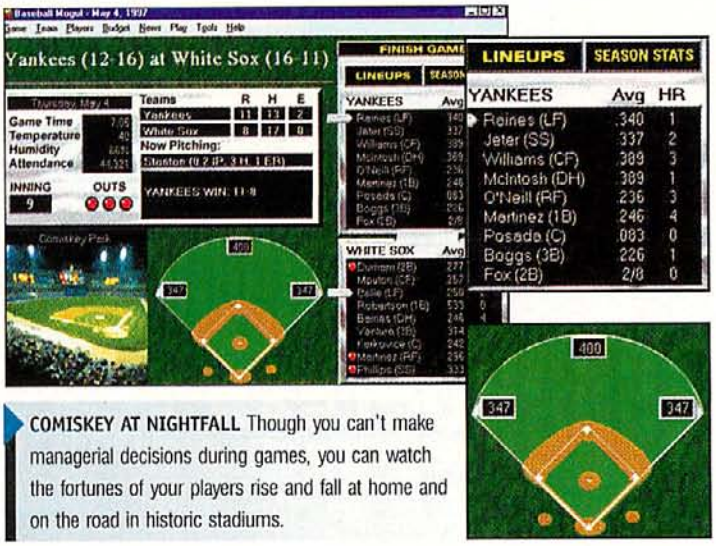
As it is in real life, good scouting is essential in MOGUL. If you don't rank among the top few teams in scouting expenses, you won't get accurate assessments of player abilities. That's fine for established players. You should always begin with last season's stats to evaluate veterans. But rookies, minor-leaguers, and part-time players don't have established stats. MOGUL assigns letter grades for power, contact hitting, speed, pitching control, pitching power, and endurance, among other attributes. There's also a brief assessment of each player, something along the lines of "with just a little more development time, he'll be a fine second baseman." The accuracy of these assessments and the letter grades depends completely on how high you rank in scouting expenditures.

BY THE NUMBERS

Statistically, MOGUL does a decent job of simulating baseball's numbers. It isn't as exact as the top text-based simulators, but players will perform within a realistic range. There's also a fair amount of unpredictability built in. This doesn't cause freak individual performances or statistical deterioration in later seasons, and that's quite an achievement, given the current state of most baseball sims. It would have been nice, however, for the game to have included park effects in calculating player performances. In BASEBALL MOGUL, each player is assigned a baseline for a handful of



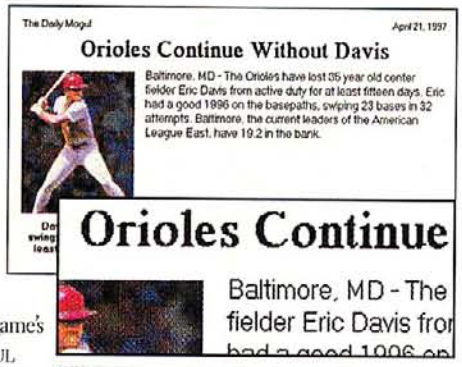
Price: $49.95
Minimum System Requirements: 486/66 (Pentium 90 or better recommended), Windows 95, 8MB RAM (16MB recommended), 8MB hard-disk space; supports Windows-compatible sound cards.
Multiplayer Support: None.
Designer: Clayton Dreslough
Publisher: Infinite Monkey Systems, Inc.
Middletown, CT
888-BBMOGUL
www.imonkey.com
Reader Service #: 339



COMISKEY AT NIGHTFALL Though you can't make managerial decisions during games, you can watch the fortunes of your players rise and fall at home and on the road in historic stadiums.

statistics. That baseline changes with age, experience, and a little random luck. More important, it's hidden from the general managers, which adds a lot of realism to the game. (Even the letter grades give away too much as far as I'm concerned.)

Baselines are close to real-life performances for players with more than a year of Major League experience. For rookies and inexperienced players, there's a more random baseline — one that changes each time you start a new game. That can be quite a shock. In one simulation, Seattle's Edwin Hurtado, probably as poor a prospect as you'll ever find in real life, became a Cy Young Award winner in 2004, capping a solid career. Of course, Hurtado is three years younger in the MOGUL world than in real life, something you can edit along with his baseline numbers by switching to the game's "commissioner mode." MOGUL games start in 1997, with about 50 real-life players assigned to each franchise. After each season, a handful of rookies are assigned to each team. These players have made-up names and random positions. While the game doesn't include pictures of current athletes, Designer Clayton Dreslough's wife, Deirdre, provided hundreds of tiny generic drawings for players, agents, and general managers.



WHO NEEDS BASEBALL WEEKLY?
Newspaper-style reports fill you in on everything from the pennant race to hitting streaks.

For most playoff games, and for occasional games during the regular season, BASEBALL MOGUL produces a newspaper-style story about the game, along with a log and a box score. This lends an air of authenticity to the game, even though there isn't a lot of variation built into the story generator. The newspaper also announces Cy Young, MVP, and Rookie of the Year Awards, although I have seen the Rookie of the Year go to a pitcher who appeared in only four games.

A FEW FOUL BALLS

MOGUL simulates fairly quickly, going through a day's worth of games in a few seconds. If you want to "watch" a game, you can see a text-based play-by-play on a scoreboard. You can't make managerial decisions, however. The game uses your set lineup each time, and except in the case of injuries, your reserves and your last three relievers rarely play.

Gameplay isn't as robust as the pure baseball sims on the market. The game won't pinch-hit for pitchers even when they're coming out of the game in the following inning. Lead runners almost always get doubled off bases on line drives. Sometimes, baserunners simply disappear without an out credited, a run scored, or any explanation in the game log. Pitchers are often left in well beyond their effectiveness. It's not unusual, for instance, to see a pitcher give up eight runs in the eighth inning without relief, failing to protect a 3-1 lead. Despite these minor flaws, however, the game manages to produce mostly accurate seasons for players.

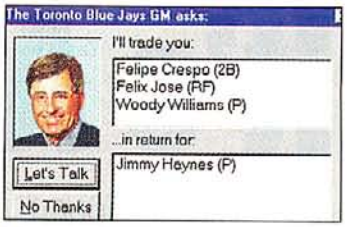
All in all, BASEBALL MOGUL is an innovative, tightly focused game that captures the feel of building a franchise. You make decisions about hot dog and ticket prices, and whether to broadcast games on local television or pay-per-view; you set scouting, farm system, and medical budgets. And most of all, you trade until you run out of players. With a little more work, this could be a great game. As it is, it will give armchair GMs a lot of excitement. Even with its flaws, this is one of the most addictive games I've played in a long time.

APPEAL: Any fan who dreams of being a baseball GM.

PROS: First game to take team management seriously; realistic numbers and a solid look at financial concerns.

CONS: Trading module could be better; rookies, especially pitchers, can step in and perform like all-stars.

CG RATED

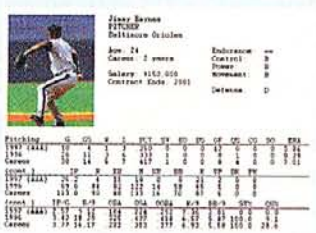


NO BUBBLE GUM REQUIRED
Computer-controlled GMs pop up at every turn, offering trades. With the patch, they drive a hard bargain on the upper difficulty levels.

Scouting the Base Paths

Once you have an accurate talent assessment, you can scour opponents for top-notch rookie talent, then trade your high-priced stars. You'll probably even get a little money back. Rookies with great abilities perform very well in the lineup, especially pitchers. A good reliever can be a good starting pitcher, so, it's easy to put together a great pitching staff without spending a lot of money. Just keep stealing top prospects through trade and trying them out. In real baseball, collecting a solid starting rotation is difficult and expensive.

Make sure you get the latest version of the game, which offers a tougher trading AI and corrects an 8-bit singed integer problem with stored stats. To his credit, the designer constantly answers questions posted to USENET and openly discusses simulation details. In a marketplace where making a quick buck usually takes precedence over quality, it's refreshing to see a company show serious interest in satisfying its customers.

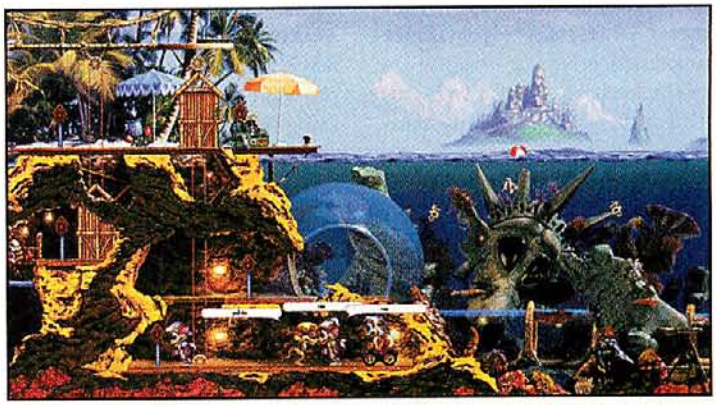


DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

It's Alive

CREATURES Is Bound To Tickle Your Fancy

by Dawn Jepsen



THE BIG PICTURE To minimize awkward scrolling, run CREATURES in the highest resolution that your video card will support.

Albia is a paradise, filled with lush plant life, beautiful mountains, and clear waters. It's inhabited by cute, peaceful creatures called Norns, which resemble less furry versions of Gizmo from the film *Gremlins*. Alas, Albia is also inhabited by the green, diseased Grendel. Happily, Albia has *you* as its overseer, and your job is to help keep the Norns happy, healthy, and prolific.

CREATURES isn't a traditional game. It's an artificial life program without set goals—imagine the classic LITTLE COMPUTER PEOPLE, only with breeding and genetic factors. The creatures in question, Norns, are cute little animals that are hatched from an egg and, with your guidance, mature into adulthood, have families, and eventually die. Each Norn has a very distinctive personality controlled by approximately 246 different variables within the Norn's neural network. A Norn's actions are determined by its individual genetic makeup and its reactions to its constantly changing environment; Norns can breed, and their characteristics are convincingly passed on to their offspring. Your role in all of this is as a guardian to the Norns. In the game, you are represented by a hand, which also serves to move things, tickle or slap the Norns, and to point to objects in Albia.



Price: $39.99
Minimum System Requirements: Pentium 60, Windows 95 or Windows 3.11, 8MB RAM, 60MB hard-disk space, SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM, 16-bit DirectX-compatible sound card.
Macintosh: Power Mac, 16MB RAM, CD-ROM drive, System 7.5 or higher, 35MB hard-disk space, 256-color display.
Multiplayer Support: None.
Designer: Cyberlife Technology LTD
Publisher: Mindscape Sunnyvale, CA 94608 (408) 737-6800
www.creatures.mindscape.com
Reader Service #: 340

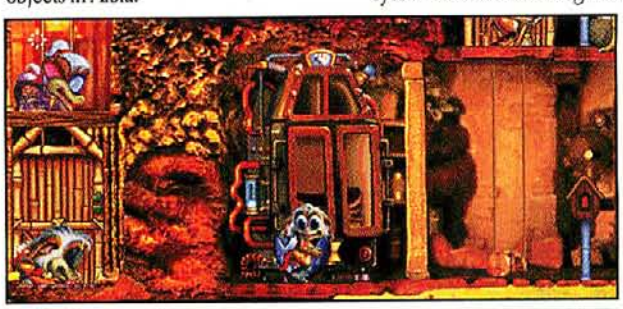
IN THE BEGINNING

Before hatching my first Norn, I decided to take a quick peek around Albia. Unfortunately, it's quite difficult to take a leisurely scroll around Albia, due to slow screen updates. I found it quicker to save locations such as the pond, beehive, kitchen, incubator, island, and garden using the game's Favorite Places feature. Albia's landscape is detailed, varied, and beautifully drawn. Just the kind of place you'd want to raise a family.

Because female Norns take longer to develop, I chose a female egg from the hatchery, placed it carefully in the incubator, and waited anxiously for the birth of my first Norn. Within a few minutes, I had an adorable baby girl that looked like a cross between Gizmo and a lop-eared rabbit. She had the biggest blue eyes and the cutest little grin. I decided to call her Abbie. Abbie responded to my profuse tickling with the funniest little chuckle.

When Norns are first born, they will usually follow the hand. It's very important to reward your Norn with a tickle whenever she follows the hand or responds appropriately to a command. If your Norn doesn't respond correctly, give her *one slap only* and she should become more obliging. If you slap her too often, even accidentally, she will fear you, run from the hand, and eventually slap other Norns.

I led Abbie to the computer where she quickly learned her verbs. This is an imperative step in the Norns' development, as failing to do so may hinder their survival skills. It seems that word retention is quite difficult for most Norns, so have your newborn repeat the words she learns several times. From



BITTERSWEET BIRTH If Albia is at capacity, an older Norn must die before a new baby can be hatched.



OTHER SIDE OF THE TRACKS Grendels steal food, carry disease, and teach Norns antisocial behavior.

here, I coaxed Abbie into the garden where my intent was to teach her the names of objects in Albia. This proved more difficult than I anticipated, and I soon realized that Abbie was referring to me as "food." I eventually determined that Abbie was looking at the hand, not a carrot, when I typed in "food." Take plenty of time teaching your Norn how to eat, sleep, and identify objects and you'll be spared a great deal of frustration in the long run.

Since I was managing fairly well at this point, I introduced a male Norn to Albia—and to Abbie. Andrew proved to be very cute, with a fluffy tail, knee boots, and dark colored bands on his arms. I tried in vain to lure Andrew to the computer. It was here that I discovered one of the most frustrating aspects of rearing Norns. The most interesting thing to a Norn is another Norn, and Andrew and Abbie were virtually inseparable.

The solution was to temporarily export Abbie, which not only saved her as a file which could be shared with other CREATURES fans, but also removed her from the program. Once Andrew acquired adequate life skills, I imported Abbie back into Albia. While older Norns will teach your babies words, they are often fragmented or altogether incorrect, and older Norns will often regress to "baby talk" after spending time with unlearned newborns.

CREATURE COMFORTS

Soon, my Norns were ready to explore Albia without a lot of direction from me. I was however, anxious for my lovebirds to breed. Thinking I could help things along, I opened up the breeder kit to see if my Norns were in the mood. Determined that Abbie and Andy would be more than just good friends, I fed each a tomato aphrodisiac and waited. Before long I was the proud mother of my first natural born Norn baby. Beth had characteristics from both parents and proved to be a rather quick learner. After hatching a mate for Beth, I found I had more than enough to keep me busy. With the ever curious Norns ever increasing their numbers, trouble is bound to come along. It does, in the form of a Grendel.

The Grendel is a nasty green lizard-looking creature that seeks out your innocent Norns for playtime. In "playing" with the Norns, the Grendel passes on diseases, steals food, and slaps them silly. To prevent your Norns from getting sick or violent, teach them to defend themselves. Whenever the Grendel approaches, direct your Norns to either "run" or "push Grendel." If you have several friendly Norns slapping the Grendel at once, he will usually tuck his tail and run. For a more permanent solution, entice the beast to eat a death cap mushroom. The Grendel dies and you will have about 30 minutes before another is hatched.

After investing a great deal of time and affection to my Norns, I found I had grown quite attached to them. It was then, quite despairing to watch my ailing Abbie grow frail and ill. I scanned the health and science kits for herbal cures, pain medicine, and just plain shots of energy. It was futile. After bearing three delightful children, Abbie curled up as if she were sleeping, let out a little moan, and died as I watched helplessly. Andrew stood faithfully at her side, calling her name and "pushing" her.

On the verge of deciding that all of this was just too depressing, I discovered I had a new egg. A bittersweet cycle began again in this delightful and well thought out game. I've now played CREATURES so much that my real-life family is seeking an intervention.

Norn Adoption Agencies

In the short time since its release, CREATURES has gathered an amazing online following. On developer Cyberlife's Web page (**www.cyberlife.co.uk**), you'll find tips, background information, and add-ons including free Purple Mountain Norns. Also here is information about the much anticipated genetics kit which will allow you to make test tube Norns and a Grendel/Norn hybrid, amongst other things.

You'll also find links to well over 50 user-created CREATURES pages. Some feature Norn editors, as well as hacks for getting rid of the Grendel for good or making him as nice as your Norns. The widest variety of pages allow you to "adopt" Norns from breeders all over the world. Especially popular are unique Norns with unusual colors, brain size, or life spans—mutations that speak well of the complexity of CREATURES' genetics modeling.





TICKLED OUT Tickling a sleep-resistant Norn will usually lull it into a nap.

APPEAL: Gamers who enjoy SIMCITY-style games; people who live in apartments that don't allow pets.

PROS: Norns exhibit very convincing behavior; detailed genetics model; strong support from the company for online additions.

CONS: 12-Norn limit means otherwise healthy Norns must die to make room, a depressing experience; program scrolling could be better.

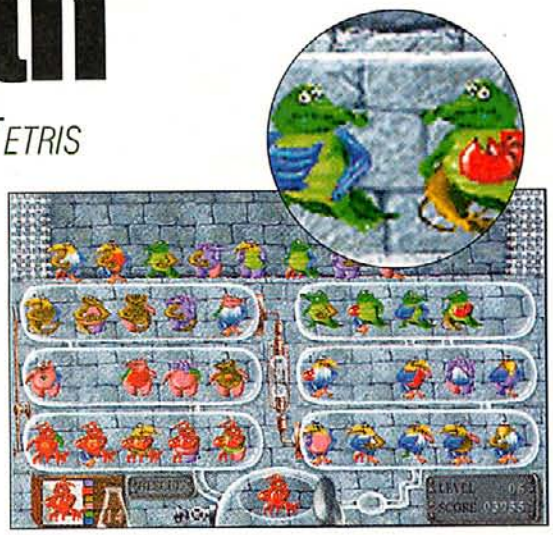
CG RATED ★★★★

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

The Puzzle King Returneth

Alexey Pajitnov Offers Life After TETRIS

by Charlotte Panther



MENDEL'S NIGHTMARE Breed a perfect species before the mutants take over your lab in *Mixed Genetics*.

Do you stare blankly at your monitor in the morning, wondering when that first caffeine fix will kick in? The MICROSOFT ENTERTAINMENT PACK: THE PUZZLE COLLECTION will soon have the cerebral juices flowing through the old noggin again. If you are familiar with Microsoft's previous ENTERTAINMENT PACKS, you'll know what to expect. For those of you who are not, I should warn you that these games are not particularly flashy or hi-tech; if you're looking for snazzy graphics or terrific sound, you'll be disappointed. Nonetheless, this is a terrific collection of addictive little brain-teasers that are easy to grasp yet difficult to master—the perfect distraction during never-ending phone calls.

This latest PUZZLE COLLECTION includes 10 all-new puzzles, several of them created by TETRIS designer Alexey Pajitnov, and while none of the puzzles actually includes falling colored-blocks, the TETRIS influence is clearly apparent.

There were three games to which I found myself returning constantly, the first being *Mixed Genetics*. This wacky puzzle has you playing God, breeding strange mutated animals—crocodiles with elephant legs and monkey arms, hippopotami with lobster tails and bird wings—to create a pure species. In order to proceed to the next level, you must free a certain number of thoroughbreds from the lab. Mutants are constantly dropping in; allow your lab to fill up and you lose the game.

Rat Poker lets you trap different colored rats, and release them at just the right time to form a winning poker hand. If you're not fast enough with your combinations, your screen will become overrun with rambunctious rodents.

My other favorite, *Finty Flush*, is rather like playing with a four-sided Rubik's Cube. Slide columns back and forth in order to drop a correct combination of marbles into each of four grids. Take too long, and the sliding columns will jam, making it impossible for you to move.

TETRIS RECYCLING

Other puzzles include *Snake Charmer*, which, as does TETRIS, has you scrambling to keep your screen free of mounting objects—in this case snake-pots. In *Color Collision* you must guide a fast-flying colored pointer, which constantly changes color, toward balls of the same color. *Jewel Chase*, a cat- and mouse-chase game, has you picking up jewels as you attempt to beat your opponent to the exit. *Spring Weekend* requires you to duplicate a pattern in as few moves as possible, by rotating hexagonally linked icons. In *Muddled Casino*, you strain your brain as you determine how to remove playing cards from a grid in a given order. The only puzzle I really disliked was *Fringer*, the object of which is to unravel different colored ropes.

All in all, THE PUZZLE COLLECTION should please both serious puzzle fans and those looking for an occasional quick fix. If you're looking for puzzles that combine strategic thinking with fast reflex action, this pack's for you. But beware—THE PUZZLE COLLECTION can seriously damage your productivity level.



Price: $34.95
Minimum System Requirements: 486/66, 8MB RAM, 6 MB hard-disk space (30MB for full install), Windows 95 or NT, 640x480 256-color SVGA graphics, 2x CD ROM, Windows-compatible sound card, mouse.
Multiplayer Support: None.
Developer: Mir Dialogue
Publisher: Microsoft
Seattle, WA
(206) 882-8080
www.microsoft.com
Reader Service #: 341



FOUR-WAY OR NO WAY Fill each grid with the balls of the correct color in this Rubik's-Cubelike puzzle, *Finty Flush*.

APPEAL: Quick-thinking, strategically minded puzzle fans.

PROS: The best puzzles are fun and varied, featuring a wide range of skill levels.

CONS: Uninspired graphics and sound; a couple of lame puzzles.

CG RATED ★★★★

AFRAID OF THE DARK?

YOU WILL BE!



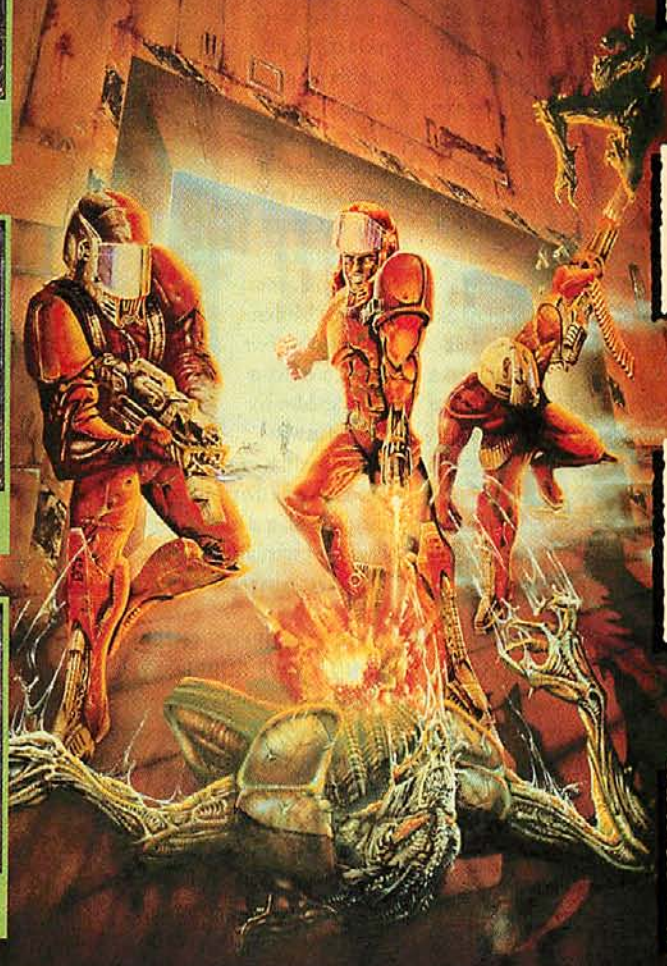
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"Every single weapon has some kind of demented effect, all of which are wonderfully gross and twisted."
online gaming review

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #176

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

You've Got Gubble, My Friends

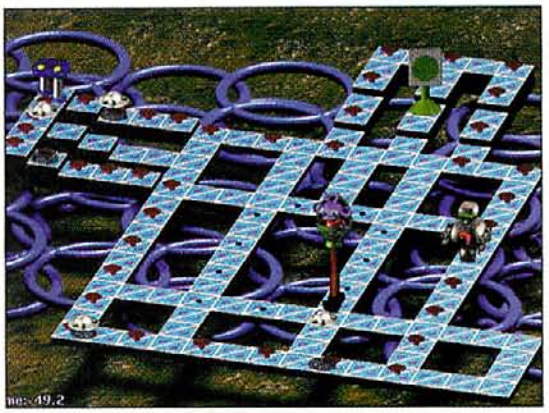
Old-Style Puzzle Action, Right Here in River City

by Charles Ardai

Many years ago, a not hugely popular arcade game called CRYSTAL CAVERNS had you run around three-dimensional mazes picking up jewels from the paths. As I recall, your character's name was something like "Bentley Bear," and the whole thing was cute enough to send a diabetic into sugar shock. It was also hard to play—both in arcades, where a trackball helped, and at home, where a joystick did not (it didn't naturally line up with the diagonal 3-D perspective of the mazes).

The designer of CRYSTAL CAVERNS has apparently been aching ever since to make a sequel, since now he's come out with GUBBLE. Here, you're cast as "Gubble D. Gleep," a supposedly adorable alien mistakenly abducted to a world of 3-D mazes and forced to collect fasteners from the paths in order to escape. In order to collect a given type of fastener you have to be holding the right tool—screwdriver for screws, drill for rivets, and so on. And, of course, there are various types of bad guys chasing you, obstacles that you either can or cannot fly over, bombs to knock Gubble on his butt if he runs over them, and on, and on.

It's an arcade game, by gum, in the grand old style. It recalls CRYSTAL CAVERNS more than any other single game, but there are hints of *Q*bert* as well, and even a little *Pac-Man*. For those of us who have missed this sort of game for the past 10 years, it should be a godsend, or at least a delicious little diversion. Unfortunately, it falls far short of the former and somewhat short of the latter.



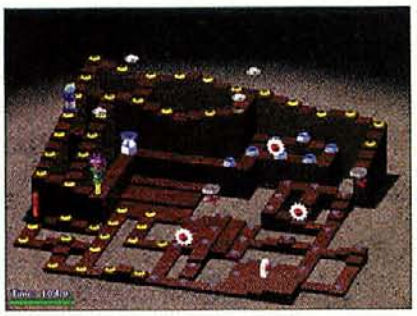
LOCKING RING TORTURE While it might look like an ad for the Winter Olympics, this puzzle requires a modicum of thought.

YOUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN GONNA HAVE GUBBLE

The graphics in the game are large, and the levels stay simple for a long time, making GUBBLE a natural for first-time gamers, especially ages 10 and under. Those of us who are somewhat older (and even 10-year-olds fed since age 6 on Nintendo's toughest) will be better off playing something else. Although the levels do gradually get harder, the game comes off as a low-stress toy for beginners.

Will beginners like it? That depends on their tolerance for artificial cuteness: Unlike Q*bert, who was naturally cute, Gubble is ugly and plastic-looking but obviously designed by a committee of marketing geniuses to push the needle on the Audience Reaction Cute-ometer. Big eyes, big ears, "adorable" alien grumbling and cursing when he gets clonked by a meanie...it got on my nerves. But, then, people tell me I'm too sensitive.

What will surely annoy beginners is trying to turn onto a path and missing it because they push the correct directional arrow key but not at precisely the correct time. GUBBLE had me going back and forth a lot, just trying to make a simple turn. It's the same feeling I had years ago while trying to make a left turn in CRYSTAL CAVERNS. But that's not the old-time feeling I wanted most particularly to recapture.



POWER-TOOL JUNKIE Like a techie on speed, you'll have to switch tools constantly or Gubble will take a tumble.



Price: $29.95
Minimum System Requirements: 486/66 processor (P90 or better recommended), Windows 95, 8MB RAM, 20MB hard-disk space, 2x CD-ROM, DirectDraw-compatible SVGA graphics, Win 95-compatible sound card; supports gamepad, joystick.
Multiplayer Support: None.
Designer: Franz Lanzinger
Publisher: Actual Entertainment Santa Clara, CA (408) 654-7950
www.gubble.com
Distributor: RandomSoft
Reader Service #: 342

▸APPEAL: CRYSTAL CAVERNS freaks.

▸PROS: Old-fashioned arcade gameplay, large graphics, and simple puzzles make GUBBLE good for kids and first-timers.

▸CONS: The cuteness is too forced; the controls can be unresponsive; most of the levels are too easy for serious or experienced gamers.

CG RATED ★★★☆☆

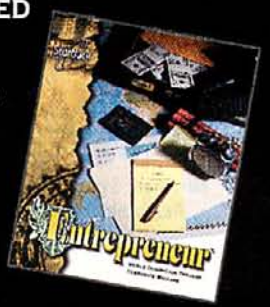
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #192

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Pacific Vacation

The GENERAL Series Closes With a Big Bang

by Tim Carter

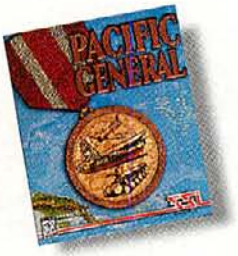


AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT HEAVEN The new graphics aren't just cosmetic—ships move differently through deep and shallow water.

When I initially received the box copy of PACIFIC GENERAL for review, my first question was: shouldn't they call it PACIFIC ADMIRAL? After all, how could you simulate the war in the Pacific without a healthy dose of naval combat, particularly carrier-based naval combat?

Well, I was wrong; PACIFIC GENERAL lives up to its name. The bulk of the fighting (although by no means all of it) happens on land, and virtually all of the big strategic challenges revolve around land combat and land units.

And the game does a fine job at it, too. While there are a few minor glitches in the interface, and while the play balance is a touch out of whack on some scenarios, on the whole, PACIFIC GENERAL is fast, fun, and challenging. It marks SSI's return to the roots of the GENERAL series with a solid, WWII campaign that provides strategic management and context to a diverse range of individual scenarios.



Price: $59.95
Minimum System Requirements: Pentium 90, 16MB RAM, 80MB hard-disk space.
Multiplayer Support: 1–4 IPX network or Internet, 1–2 hotseat or email.
Designers: John Eberhart, Glen Cureton and the SSI Special Projects Group
Publisher: SSI
Sunnyvale, CA
(800) 245-4525
www.ssionline.com
Reader Service #: 343

NAVAL LINT

PACIFIC GENERAL marks a return to the good campaigns and smooth and simple interface of the original PANZER GENERAL. Units are controlled through the same point and click controls that made earlier games easy to play and fun. To make command and control even easier, you may now give ancillary commands—such as refueling; upgrading; or adding replacements—by double-clicking on the unit itself, rather than by using a toolbar.

The strategic maps are clear and useful, and most of the data you need is easily accessible. I say most because a few glitches make some things more difficult than they need to be. The weather display, for instance, uses short films to show the weather. As the resolution on these films is not particularly high, it's sometimes difficult to see what the weather is like. (The solution is to check at the beginning of each turn, when the turn change screen will tell you the current weather and give a forecast for the next turn.)

Also, unit statistics in the upgrade/purchase screen are displayed using a confusing set of icons. Properly understanding this screen requires extensive referencing in the manual to figure out what all the numbers mean. As the stats for each unit may be called up in concise written form during the game itself, I see no reason why this same information has to be displayed in such and ugly and confusing format during the one time when a careful reading of all the stats is important.

PACIFIC PLAYABILITY

The game reflects the wide variety of Pacific combat—from massive land campaigns in China to attacks on tiny fortified atolls like Tarawa. As per PANZER GENERAL, realism and scale take a back seat to playability, and purists looking for logistics, line of supply, and grognard-pleasing minutiae will likely be disappointed.

What's interesting is that, in some scenarios, the computer does not allow you to place all of your forces. For instance, when I invaded New Guinea (as the Japanese) I had no set-up squares in deep water. As a result, my carriers and battleships had nowhere to go and were excluded. I'm not sure if this was done on purpose to balance the scenario or through an oversight, but it didn't prevent me from enjoying the scenario, so I won't complain too loudly.

Other historical faux pas include your ability to use land-based air in the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the possibility of building and using an armored Japanese



U.S. SUPERCRUISERS? Rating U.S. cruisers as equal or better to Japanese vessels is a bit much.

land army. (In general, the Pacific was an infantryman's war, a fact that is reflected in some, but not all, of the scenarios.)

I also have to question the initial strengths of the 4F4 Wildcat, which here can be found knocking Zeros out of the sky with impunity, and the U.S. cruisers, circa 1942, which generally hold their own against the big Japanese cruisers. The computer doesn't handle naval forces as well as it might. During the battle of Midway, computer-controlled Japanese forces never ventured an airstrike of any kind against either the island or the U.S. carriers. While some fighters flew CAP, several carriers were left unprotected and the entire air arm was deployed so badly that I easily destroyed it en masse.

Variable water depth also makes for interesting tactical situations, as shallow water can seriously impair the maneuverability of your heavy ships. A clever Japanese player can often exploit the superiority of smaller Japanese ships along the coastline, and both sides will want to develop a decent shallow water force to provide ground support fire inland.

Fortunately, on the ground the computer is much more able. Even using land-based air it seemed to be better at attacking my air forces and prioritizing strikes against naval and ground units. The end result is that Midway, a battle where the U.S. victory came only through great intelligence, great leadership, and phenomenally good timing (luck?), becomes a duck shoot while the Solomon Islands campaign, which should mark the beginning of the end for the Japanese, is much, much more difficult.

Of course, if you don't like the scenarios given you can always make your own using the new scenario builder that comes with the game. The construction kit is not limited to the Pacific campaign, and includes German and Russian units and all of the map files from PAC GENERAL, PANZER GENERAL, and ALLIED GENERAL. Sadly, you can't make campaigns.

APPEAL: Anyone interested in strategy games.

PROS: Fast, easy, and fun with good campaigns, multiplayer options, and scenario generator.

CONS: AI has serious lapses in sea battles; play balance is skewed in some scenarios; this grand game engine is beginning to show its age.

CG RATED

THIS GENERAL'S A KEEPER

Ultimately, PACIFIC GENERAL focuses on land campaigns, and here it is on solid ground. One of my favorite elements in the game is the difficulty of successfully launching an amphibious landing. Your forces are frequently vulnerable until they are off the beach. The computer exploits this vulnerability well, and more than once I quickly lost core units.

PACIFIC GENERAL is by no means perfect. Flaws in the AI make it too easy in some scenarios, although extensive Internet and email options should make multiplayer games considerably more viable than past GENERAL products. Still, even with the odd glitch, PACIFIC GENERAL is the first sequel to PANZER GENERAL that really takes advantage of the strengths of the basic game system. As such, it will make for hours of enjoyable gaming and should have no trouble retaining a place on your hard drive.



FLATTOPS New aircraft carrier rules are a welcome change, but the AI doesn't handle them as well as ground units.

Hitting the Campaign Trail

PACIFIC GENERAL offers gamers a range of campaign choices, which gives the game considerable depth. For the first time in this series players may elect to play either side in the conflict. As the Japanese, you begin by conquering Nationalist China and then sneak-attacking Pearl Harbor. You later gain the option of attacking the British Empire via Malaysia, Singapore, and India or going after the United States through New Guinea, Australia, and Hawaii. While there is no British campaign, as the Americans you can elect to stay in the South Pacific or move toward Japan via the Central Pacific.

These multiple, independent campaign paths add much to the game's replayability, particularly when you consider the unique strategic challenges and shortages facing the Japanese: lots of upgrade options but scarce resources and generally inferior equipment. I have to question the Japanese path to victory in the campaign game: Not only are the battles of Midway and the Coral Sea missing (Midway is part of the U.S. campaign, though,), but it is possible to completely vanquish the United States without ever facing the U.S. Navy. A decisive victory in New Guinea (which assumes a victory in the Coral Sea) takes you to Australia, Hawaii, and then San Francisco, which, combined, offer a single U.S. carrier task force for naval opposition.



POOR MAN'S PANZERS The Japanese and Allied campaigns really play differently. The Sons of Nippon could use a few Tigers to flesh out their woefully inadequate armor.

IMPERIA

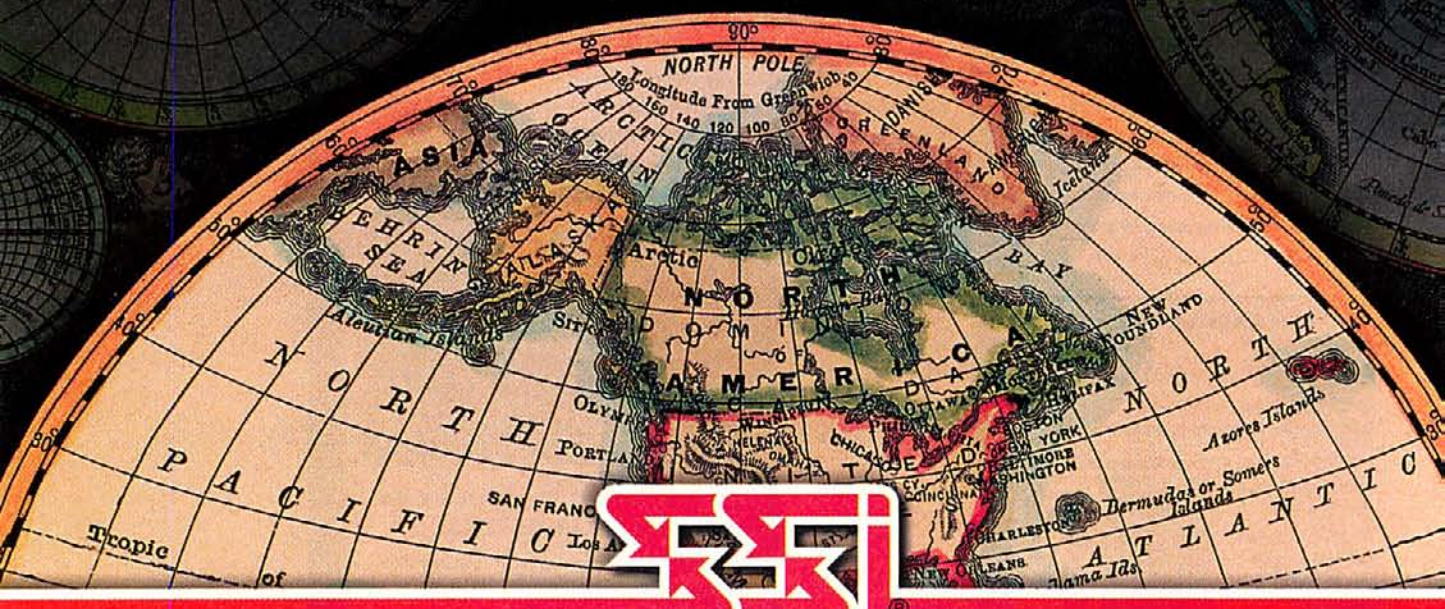
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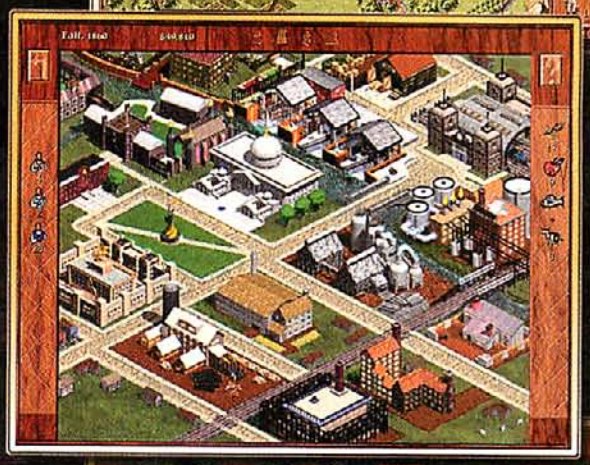


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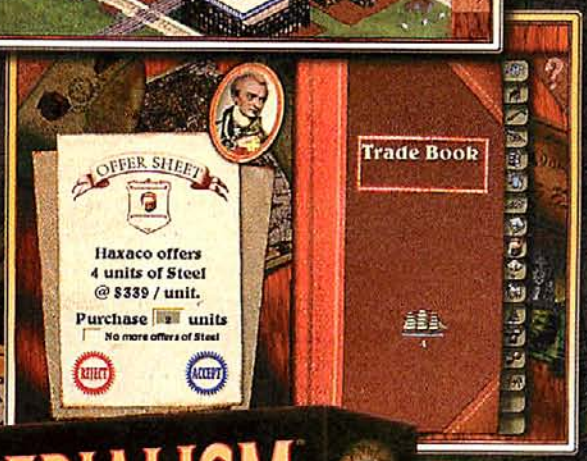
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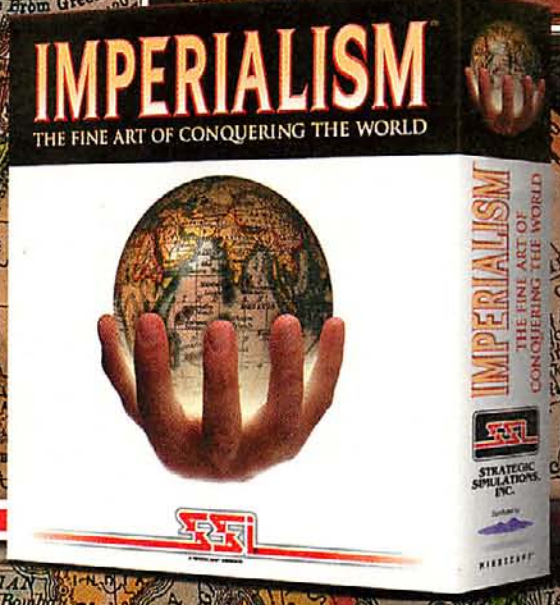
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DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

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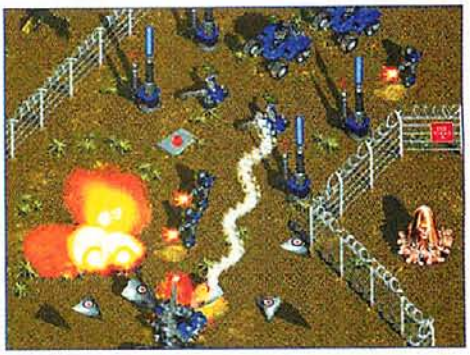
Latest C&C Clone Has That "Been There, Done That" Feel

by Martin E. Cirulis

Yes folks, it's time to look at yet another COMMAND & CONQUER clone. This month's lovely contestant is a competently constructed piece of tactical mayhem brought to you by the kids at SSI and GameTek, and goes by the somewhat generic name of DARK COLONY. (Is it just me, or are there too many games with the word "Dark" in the title?) Unfortunately, it's not just the title of this one that comes off as generic, and despite some great graphics and the odd interesting scenario, this one leaves you with a strong feeling of "Been there, done that."

RED SANDS, GREEN BLOOD

Right from the start, DC wears what little originality it has like stage makeup, trying desperately to disguise a face we have seen too many times. This game takes place on Mars, where Humanity has managed to do some terraforming along with a bit of colonization. So far so good, especially when one of those wacky wonder elements that solve all the world's problems starts coming out of the ground like bubbling crude. Unfortunately, instead of packing up the family shuttle and heading to Beverly Hills, you are stuck defending these new, vital drilling interests from a bunch of big-headed, big-eyed little gray guys who have taken a break from their X-COM hijinks to stake their own claim to the sands of Mars. Plus, somewhere in this volatile mix are the remnants of yet another group of aliens who left Mars long ago without taking all their toys.



RUNNING THE GAUNTLET DARK COLONY is a slick-looking, competent real-time game that pits human colonists against Gray aliens on Mars.

So once again, despite all the hip words floating around such as "Mars," "Grays," and "Bio-Technology," all we have here is yet another real-time wargame; you must build a base, harvest uber-material to build combat units, and cream the other guys who are doing exactly the same thing.

The actual mechanics of this process has strong and weak points. The uber-material comes out of the ground in Old Faithful-like eruptions that you have to cap with a drilling rig quickly, before the bounty comes to an end. This makes for some interesting tactical situations, as an erupting vent must be seized and controlled, often before you are ready to seize and hold new territory.

Another nice touch is DC's use of night and day to alter the balance of power on the map. In a nod toward the problems of Vietnam, the Terrans have the advantage in sighting distance during the day while the Grays own the night. This difference in sight range does not seem like much until you realize that artillery



GRAYED OUT Combat in DARK COLONY is typical real-time fare, but falls short in the long run because resources peter out too quickly. That means you have to strike quickly and decisively to win.



Price: $49.99
Minimum System Requirements: Pentium 90, Windows 95, 16MB RAM, 2x CD-ROM drive, 1MB SVGA graphics card, 100 percent Windows-compatible sound card.
Multiplayer Support: Modem, serial (2 players), LAN (2–8 players).
Designer: GameTek
Publisher: SSI Online
www.ssionline.com
Reader Service #: 344



DEATH BY NIGHT One of DARK COLONY's best features is the day/night cycle, which actually affects gameplay. Humans are better by day, Grays by night.

pieces have incredible range but are dependent on spotting units to use their range to its maximum. Seeing your enemy before they can see you is often a devastating and decisive key to victory in any engagement.

Unfortunately, it's at this point where this title's innovation begins to run out. Other aspects of this game are either simplified to the point of irrelevance (the whole base-building model is as interesting as piling up blocks) or blatantly lifted from other real-time games (WARCRAFT fans will have no problem figuring out the "technology" system). There is some attempt to make the terrain a viable part of this game; features obstruct line of sight, but the units are just too oversized in relationship to the map to take "cover" seriously. When it comes right down to it, this game might as well be taking place outside Poughkeepsie instead of Mars, for all the difference it makes. A game that took into account the factors involved with waging war on a real Mars might have been a more interesting angle than simply driving over red sand.

THE SLOW GRIND

Of course, if lack of originality were a crime, then half the game industry would be doing hard time. No, the most serious flaw in DARK COLONY is the fact that many of the scenarios become a grind instead of wide-open combat, due mainly to the fact that the game is seriously stingy when it comes to resource vents. Limited supplies can be an interesting factor in a wargame, but it shouldn't dictate the end of almost every battle. The mix of units, both offensive and defensive, which lead to very basic and repetitive patterns of play very early on in the game, does not help things. By the time you've played the third or fourth scenario, you have pretty much mastered the skills necessary to take you through the entire game. Even playing the game from the alien side does little to change things, as their units are just far too analogous. Increased resources and map size (in a patch) might alleviate some of this, but I wouldn't hold my breath.

Sound and graphics are well done, but the animated cut-scenes are almost crude by comparison, and come off like *Communion* meets *The Wild Bunch*. There is your basic mix of wide-open base-battles and "quest" missions with limited units. It has a multiplayer network/modem suite that has become standard in the real-time genre. The AI is no brain surgeon, and delights in throwing away money on token air units and repetitive attack plans, but tailoring its behavior to each map has helped to push it into the adequate category.

In the end, DARK COLONY is slick, but ultimately empty, fare—both in terms of style and tactical challenge. A little more balancing of game factors may have helped, but SSI has already proven they have something relevant to bring to the real-time table with WARWIND, a game that is more original and innovative the third or fourth time around than DARK COLONY is right out of the box.

The Miser's Path

DARK COLONY is very stingy when it comes to resources. You must be very aware of your money supply and how easily it runs out. The first thing you need to do in every scenario is to get your drilling rig on top of the first vent, so the dollars start flowing in immediately. Then scout as much terrain as you can, without draining the defensive force that will be vital in surviving the enemy's initial, inevitable rush.

Once you get established and can put together a reasonable expeditionary force, always try and seize control of the vents farthest away from you in order to establish a "front" that puts most of the map's resources on your side of the broken red line. This initial step is vital, as he who controls the most vents invariably wins. Mines make for excellent quick defensive perimeters around vulnerable rigs.

The greatest mistake you can make is spending too much money on tech upgrades for your units. It makes little difference if you have the best troops in the game if you only can afford five units after doing all your "research." First, try and build up a large enough force to take on the enemy, and then worry about improving it. The only upgrades that should be bought early on, before you have a clear idea of how short money is going to be, are improvements to your Reaper/Sy Demons and your Firestorm/Xeno Wart turrets.

APPEAL: Fanatics who need that real-time fix, newcomers to the genre, or UFO hype fans.

PROS: A slick, bug-free C&C clone that does some interesting things with day and night missions and line-of-sight.

CONS: A generic mishmash wearing a cheap coat of hip sci-fi words and images; poor game balance leads to repetitive, drawn out battles.

CG RATED

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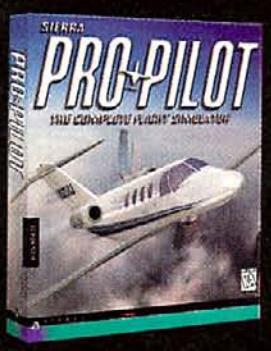




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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #359

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Draggin' Dragons

DRAGON DICE Makes the Transition to the Computer With Underwhelming Results

by Robert Coffey

Based on TSR's popular dice game of the same name, DRAGON DICE slaps a set of training wheels onto fantasy strategy gaming. With simple, easy-to-learn gameplay, gamers will quickly find themselves squaring off against hordes of elves, dwarves, and goblins in a fight for control of the land of Esfah. Unfortunately, a weak AI and lack of strategic depth make DRAGON DICE unlikely to appeal to any but the youngest or most inexperienced strategist.



ROLL DEM BONES Most of the game takes place in the strategic screen, where minimally animated armies turn into dice for battles.

TUMBLING DICE

In bringing DRAGON DICE to the computer, Interplay has done little more than put some graphics over the dice-hurling gameplay. Gamers command armies of dice, which represent units of magic-users, missile troops, or melee squads comprised of one of four races. Dice armies strive to maneuver on battlefields (called terrains) to the eighth face of the die representing that area. With each face of the terrain die designating one of the three modes of attack, the style of battle changes as play maneuvers terrain dice through progressive faces. Players can also summon powerful dragons to do their dirty work. Up to four gamers can play, and play consists of taking two-part turns followed by reinforce and retreat moves as you struggle to hold two terrains at the eighth face and claim victory.

If it sounds confusing, well...it is—especially after you watch the tutorial movies. But once you dive into an actual game, you'll find DRAGON DICE easy to learn. DRAGON DICE offers a lot of options, allowing you to compete in standard, tournament, and campaign games. It also lets you design the makeup of your dice armies. Standard games that pit you against the computer are great if you've only got an hour for gaming and offer more engaging gameplay than anything from LucasArts' series of DESKTOP ADVENTURES.

LOADED DICE

Unfortunately, DRAGON DICE isn't likely to hold your interest for more than an hour. While there are four campaigns, each consisting of 16 scenarios, the constant need just to get and hold two terrains gets old pretty fast. A couple of missions that ask you to eliminate all the dragons in Esfah or to hold one terrain for six turns provide some relief from the monotony, but they're very rare. Should you manage to slog your way through an entire campaign there is no payoff; you're just ready for a new game. Clunky animations dramatizing battles and dice-rolling don't generate much excitement either.

Though DRAGON DICE can be engaging in small doses, the poor AI and the lack of challenge defuse the game's long-term enjoyment. Later campaign games don't grow more difficult, they just get longer as you battle more shoddily managed troops. The computer rarely goes for the kill, failing to seize terrains or wipe you out even when your armies are devastated beyond effectiveness. Computer troops are frequently deployed unintelligently, which is hard to understand given the game's lack of strategic depth—after all, it's just dice rolling. The AI *is* effective when it cheats by summoning supposedly unavailable dragons every turn.

The unpredictability of playing another human makes DRAGON DICE a better game, though it's still much more shallow than other multiplayer strategy fare. Eventual add-ons might provide more variety, but I have my doubts. DRAGON DICE is best left to beginners or gamers who want a quick and easy strategy fix.



Price: $49.95
Minimum System Requirements: 486DX/66 (486DX/100 recommended), Windows 95, 8MB RAM, 40MB hard-disk space, 2x CD-ROM drive, 256-color VGA graphics, Sound Blaster-compatible sound cards, Microsoft-compatible mouse.
Multiplayer Support: Modem, serial connection (2 players); LAN, hotseat (2–4 players).
Designer: Interplay Productions
Publisher: Interplay Productions
Irvine, CA 92606
(714) 553-6678
www.interplay.com
Reader Service #: 345

APPEAL: Young or beginning strategy gamers, fans of the original game, and gamers looking for a quick diversion other than Solitaire.

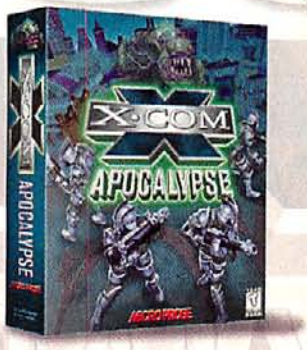
PROS: Easy to learn; offers three different types of play; dice armies can be customized; decent multiplayer game.

CONS: Very weak AI; lack of depth; repetitive play; campaigns with little scenario variety and no payoff.

CG RATED ★★

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Roberta's Gold

Scorpia Gets in the Way-Back Machine for a Look at Some Classic Sierra Adventures



This month, I was supposed to be reviewing Steve Meretzky's new comic adventure game, THE SPACE BAR. Then the CD drive on my new Pentium failed. I sent the drive in, and as I write this, thanks to the UPS strike, I'm still waiting for the replacement. Since the game is a Windows 95-only product, I couldn't use my 486 as a backup, and there wasn't anything else new available for an article. Panic button time.

After talking it over with *CGW*, we decided that I would do a piece on Sierra's recent ROBERTA WILLIAMS ANTHOLOGY. This is a collection of all the games Roberta has written, going back to the early days of the Apple II. Included are five from the Apple era—MYSTERY HOUSE, MISSION: ASTEROID, WIZARD & THE PRINCESS, TIME ZONE, and DARK CRYSTAL—along with MIXED-UP MOTHER GOOSE, the entire KING'S QUEST saga (I-VII), the two Laura Bow products (COLONEL'S BEQUEST and DAGGER OF AMON RA) and PHANTASMAGORIA I.

That's quite an assemblage, particularly as it is mainly the work of one person. If nothing else, Roberta Williams is certainly the single most prolific adventure game designer in the industry today.

APPLES AND LEMONS

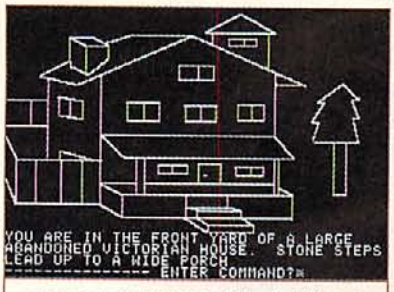
Of course, this isn't a review of the games. For one thing, they're all "previously published," and for another, the Apple adventures overall don't hold up too well in modern times; trying to review those would be unfair, at the very least.

Consider MYSTERY HOUSE, Hi-Res Adventure #1. The graphics can only be described as "blackboard": white lines crudely drawn on a black background. The game itself is no great shakes, either. But this was the first effort of a beginner, at a time when adventures were few, there weren't any precedents, and not much was around for inspiration. So we won't dwell on it.

The second game, WIZARD & THE PRINCESS, was certainly better. This is the first one I actually looked at (replayed, really), since W&P was the first graphic adventure I ever played. In fact, it was one of the first four *games* I ever played. The other three—all text adventures, by the way—were ZORK (Infocom, by way of Personal Software), PYRAMID OF DOOM (Scott Adams, via Adventure International), and ADVENTURE (from an obscure little company called Microsoft).

Even so, the graphics, though now in color, weren't any prizewinners, and it was pretty much the same for all the Apple games (not just those in this collection). We didn't notice that too much back then, because there was nothing else around for comparison, except other games with similar visuals. Looking at them now, sixteen years later, well, it's painful. SVGA graphics (even VGA) can spoil you pretty quickly.

This was partly related to the Apple itself. Like all computers of the time, it had built-in graphics (no video cards!), but they weren't exactly sensational. The high-



GHOST OF GAMES PAST Roberta Williams' first adventure was MYSTERY HOUSE, a crude little Apple II game that bears little resemblance to later works like PHANTASMAGORIA.



KING ME Graphics get much better, and so does gameplay, by the time Roberta begins the now-classic KING'S QUEST series.

> "This collection is a tribute to Roberta Williams' achievements."

resolution mode, the only one suitable for real graphics, was limited to 16 colors. The low-res mode allowed for more, but they were actual blocks of color; you couldn't get anything smaller in low-res. Obviously, low-res was not the mode of choice for games (though there was one that used it: HOUSE OF USHER, from long-gone Crystal Software; playing that was a bizarre experience).

Of course, over time, as programmers became more familiar with the quirks of the Apple graphic system, the visuals further improved. Still, nothing produced in those "good old days" can match, or even come close to today's graphics, or even to those from five or six years ago.



KID STUFF Sierra's anthology also includes Roberta's classic MIXED-UP MOTHER GOOSE, one of the first, and greatest, adventure games for kids.

THE GOLDEN AGE?

I mention all this because Sierra especially is famous for the quality of the graphics in their games. So anyone picking up the anthology and taking a look at the hi-res stuff may be surprised—maybe unpleasantly—at what they see on the screen. It won't look like KING'S QUEST VII, or, for that matter, KING'S QUEST I.



The Apple products will also introduce newer gamers to some of the other "joys" of gaming we endured during the "Golden Age." None of the hi-res adventures were ever converted to the PC platform. However, you can play them, thanks to Michael O'Brien, who wrote a special Apple IIe emulator program.

Skipping over the technicalities, the emulator allows you to run Apple games on a PC (no easy matter). The recreation is so exact you can't get any closer, except by playing an original Apple game on an Apple computer. You even have to have Caps Lock on, because the Apple was a 40-column, uppercase only system (though there were ways to get 80 columns and lowercase, they weren't native to the Apple).

The games run about as slow as they did on the Apple, and some people may be astonished at how the graphics appear: The drawn lines come in first, and the colors fill in afterwards. This happens even on a fast (relative to the Apple) computer. These games will require a little patience.

In addition, saving is a special process. All Apple games were played from floppies, so to save, you had to pull the game disk, insert the save disk, save the game, then remove the save disk and re-insert the game. It's similar here.

You type "save game," click a special icon, scroll through a directory box for the special save game file, save the game, click the icon again, scroll through the directory for the game file, and finally continue playing. It's almost like using floppies again. Oh, and you don't give the save positions names; you choose a letter from A-O (hmmm, are we *sure* that was the "Golden Age of Gaming"?).

ZONING OUT

As adventures, they're all a little primitive. Sporting "gotchas" (instant death by walking on the wrong screen unprepared and unwarned), nonlogical mazes (graph paper is a must for every game!), and horrid two-word parsers (no mouse, folks; everything is typed on the keyboard), they can be a trial to play.

Of the Apple group, probably TIME ZONE is the one most worth playing as an adventure game (as opposed to just checking out what the older games were like). Its scope, even today, is amazing, especially considering it was designed for a 48K (that's forty-eight) RAM system.

TIME ZONE came with six double-sided floppies and a stiff price: $100 retail, at a time when the average game was going for $35–50 (prices haven't changed too much since then). The manual (I still have the whole thing: box, manual, floppies, and poster) states the game isn't for beginners, and that is very true. Novice gamers would be in for a frustrating time, and even experienced ones will discover this is one tough product. TIME ZONE was the most challenging non-Infocom game I played on my Apple—and it's no easier today than it was in 1981. Definitely, this was Roberta's magnum opus in the Apple world.

When we move to the KING'S QUEST series, much changes, and with good reason. Around that time, the IBM-PC and compatibles were beginning to make a noticeable penetration into the computer market. It was only a matter of time before the era of 8-bit machines ended (sigh), and Sierra was well aware of that. They abandoned the Apple, and moved to the new platform. KING'S QUEST was designed from the start as a PC game, as were all the others after it.

KING'S BOUNTY

This naturally brought improvements. On the larger (and ever-grow-

ing) platform, the graphics were better, the mouse could be used, the hard drive made playing (as well as saving and restoring) faster, and the increased space (both in RAM and on the drive) allowed for more elaborate products. The move also brought something that the Apple didn't have: sound. Aside from the tinny speaker and a few sound cards that never caught on, Apple games were usually silent (all the games in the collection are quiet). Hard to believe these days, but true.

You can see this best by following through the sequence from the early games to the latest. Spend, say, 10 minutes with each of the Apple games, move to the KQ series and do the same, with a little time out in-between for a look at LAURA BOW, then finish up with PHANTASMAGORIA. By the time you're done, you should have a pretty good picture of Roberta's development as a game designer.

That's what the collection is about, after all. It's a tribute to her achievements, her contributions to the adventure game genre. Not all the games are good, but every author—in whatever medium—produces a clunker now and then. What matters is the overall quality of the output, and the amount of maturation over time. Roberta Williams has certainly excelled at both of those.

So yes, the ROBERTA WILLIAMS ANTHOLOGY is worth picking up, for a look at the bygone days when all this was still new, if you missed some of the earlier KING'S QUEST or LAURA BOW games, or if you'd just like to follow the development of an expert game designer over the years. Whatever the reason, the collection is certain to have something you'll like.

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #**169**

Sim World Series

Winners and Losers in This Year's Baseball Sim Contest



With the Major League playoffs in full swing, many sports gamers are reaching the critical stages of baseball fever about now. Watching your favorite team blow a lead in the ninth inning during a close pennant race is the sort of thing that compels you to grab a joystick and see if you can hit deeper, pitch harder, or manage better yourself. The good news is that this year's record-breaking crop of baseball sims makes immersing yourself in the national pastime easier than ever before. More encouraging is that several of the games are actually worth your time and money. This happy occurrence comes in stark contrast to last year's overhyped, under-play-tested bunch, which surely had Abner Doubleday spinning in his grave.

Since the real Major League stars will soon be picking up trophies on the post-season banquet circuit, I thought I'd get a jump on them by passing out a few awards of my own. So tuck in your napkin, grab a piece of rubber chicken, and sit back while we name the winners. Careful though. Don't drip any grease on the keyboard.

WORLD CHAMPS

This year's sim world series came down to a bitter fight between the best-yet offerings from two of gaming's heavyweights. In a dream matchup, EA Sports' TRIPLE PLAY 98 battled Sierra's FRONT PAGE SPORTS: BASEBALL PRO '98 for the crown. TP 98 took an early lead with an incredibly appealing graphics look. Its large, detailed players, smooth animations, and pleasing eye candy grabbed gamers by their joysticks and wouldn't let go, despite some ragged gameplay. FRONT PAGE, however, recovered incredibly from last year's bug-riddled debacle and won this fight by offering a richer simulation of big league action, supported by unbeatable league-management tools. The ability to tweak the PB.INI file in FPS '98 provided computer managers a welcome degree of flexibility in modifying the game to their taste. Crown FPS: BASEBALL PRO '98 as this year's World Champion Baseball Sim, with TRIPLE PLAY 98 a close second.

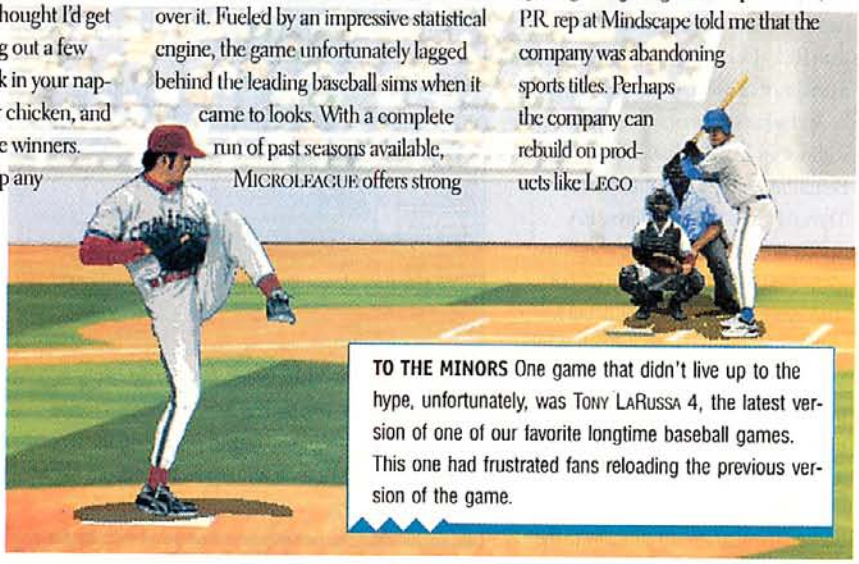
WILD CARDS AND CELLAR DWELLERS

This year's also-rans include MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL 6.0 and Stormfront's TONY LARUSSA 4. The long-awaited return of MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL, the pioneering baseball sim, had designer Dave Holt's fingerprints all over it. Fueled by an impressive statistical engine, the game unfortunately lagged behind the leading baseball sims when it came to looks. With a complete run of past seasons available, MICROLEAGUE offers strong appeal for league and replay-oriented fans. TONY 4 was rather disappointing, especially since many gamers expected a breakout season for the TONY franchise. Instead, I wonder if we've seen LaLast of LARUSSA.



MAJOR-LEAGUE RECOVERY Sierra's FPS BASEBALL PRO '98 made a remarkable comeback for a series that almost self-destructed last season.

Every season has its cellar dwellers, and this year is no exception. Virgin's GRAND SLAM was a console game masquerading as a PC title. It quickly found its level and never mounted a challenge to the leaders, finishing many games out of first place. Mindscape's AARON VS. RUTH was mathematically eliminated early in the season. In fact, this title seems to have gone a step further and eliminated its publisher from sports gaming altogether. At press time, a P.R. rep at Mindscape told me that the company was abandoning sports titles. Perhaps the company can rebuild on products like LEGO



TO THE MINORS One game that didn't live up to the hype, unfortunately, was TONY LARUSSA 4, the latest version of one of our favorite longtime baseball games. This one had frustrated fans reloading the previous version of the game.

> "Tuck in your napkin, grab a piece of rubber chicken, and sit back while we name the winners."



MISSING IN ACTION MICROSOFT BASEBALL 3D blew many of us away at E3 with its incredible graphics, but unfortunately, it didn't make it out of the dugout this season.

ISLAND. With the underwhelming AVR and NCAA FINAL FOUR 97 as its farewell offerings, Mindscape departs the sports scene not with a bang, but a whimper.

THE ENVELOPE, PLEASE

What's that, you say? Individual awards? We got 'em, pine-tar breath.

Let's start with a no-brainer: Rookie of the Year. Upstart company Infinite Monkey wowed baseball gamers with BASEBALL MOGUL, which broke new ground by bagging the arcade action and simulating the management side of the house instead. Truly a spare-bedroom operation, Infinite Monkey nonetheless produced the most innovative sports release of 1997. Despite a few bugs, BASEBALL MOGUL could prove to be the CIVILIZATION of sports gaming. Players are cast in the role of Branch Rickey rather than Ricky Henderson as they try to build a dynasty that will stand the test of time.

And what's a list of sports games without an MBP? That's Most Beautiful Player. Give this one to TRIPLE PLAY 98, hands down. EA Sports does it again, with a gorgeous game that will please your eyes, but strain your CPU. At higher detail levels, even the crowd is animated! While some gamers find the game's polygon player figures blocky, the lovingly intricate detail and virtuoso animations set a new standard in sports gaming.

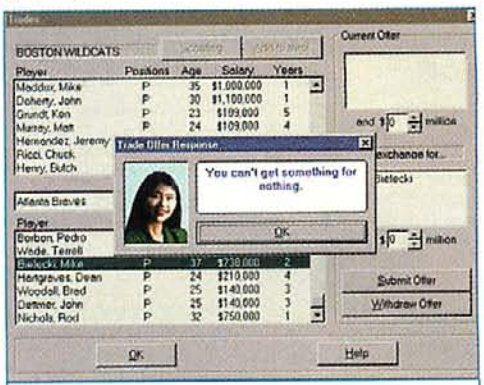
The big leagues hand out a Comeback of the Year Award annually to the player who turns a poor season around in the most dramatic fashion. This year's winner among baseball sims is clearly FRONT PAGE SPORTS: BASEBALL PRO '98. You may recall that FPS BASEBALL '96 was spanked with a godawful 1.5 star rating in *CGW* last year. Some cynics thought even that review too generous due to the game's grandstand worth of bugs. Stung by the poor reception given the game, Sierra/Dynamix retooled for the current season, focusing on realizing the design's enormous potential. And they succeeded, releasing the season's best sim, and at a very fair list price that reflects its status as more of an upgrade than a completely new title.

WAIT UNTIL NEXT YEAR

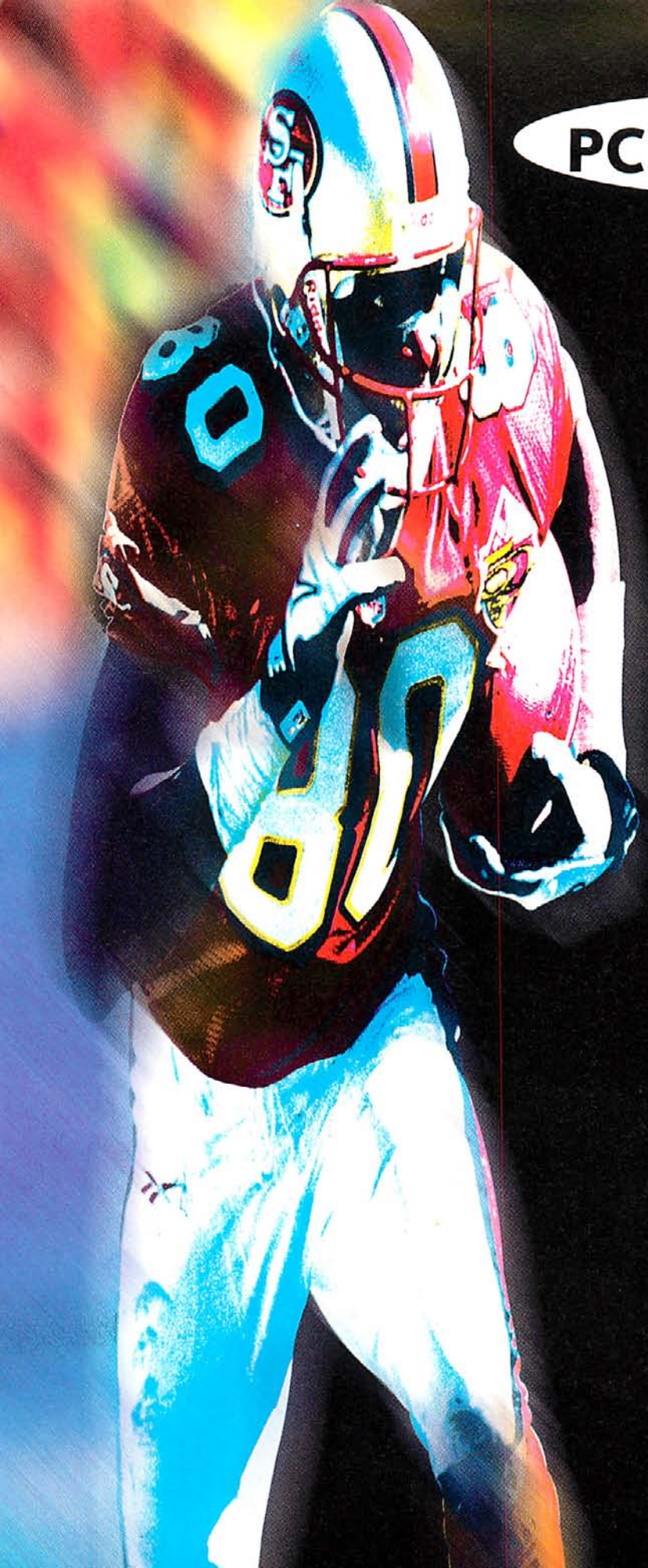
While a record number of baseball games debuted in 1997, several hotly anticipated sims went on the Disabled List, requiring additional training room attention before they're ready to take the field. MICROSOFT BASEBALL 3D caused quite a stir at E3, with its large player graphics, some of which featured scans of their namesakes' actual faces. The first sports game in history to require a 3D graphics accelerator, MICROSOFT BASEBALL 3D missed its ship date (which has now been pushed back to the spring of 1998), so you'll have more time to save for that new video card. Accolade's HARDBALL 6, another heavily 3D-oriented sim, also sat out the '97 season while the development team finished their chores. To take up the slack, Accolade released a low-cost version of HARDBALL 5 featuring updated rosters. While it was nice to have the current players, HB5 is showing its age, and Accolade's delay has significantly raised the anticipation level for its successor. Interplay's VR BASEBALL was another game that hadn't seen the light of day at press time, although the company previewed it at E3.

A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN

Stat freaks or those lacking the CPU muscle to keep up with the latest graphics-oriented sims still had plenty of options this year. Strat-O-Matic released Version 2.0 of their cleverly named CD-ROM BASEBALL (marketing department experiencing a little writer's block, guys?). Actually, 2.0 was an improvement over SOM's already excellent product, copy protection paranoia notwithstanding. At press time, Diamond Mind released version 7.0 of what some gamers consider to be the best stat engine in the business. Lance Haffner Games was back with an updated version of FULL COUNT BASEBALL. Miller Associates was preparing to issue BASEBALL FOR WINDOWS 4.0; and Cactus League announced a major new stat sim in development, CACTUS LEAGUE INTERACTIVE BASEBALL FOR WINDOWS, which might be the most ambitious stat game ever attempted—and, at $90, the most expensive.



ROOKIE OF THE YEAR Infinite Monkey System's BASEBALL MOGUL was far and away the coolest rookie sports game of the year, getting gamers off the mound and into the GM's chair for unique, thought-provoking baseball strategy.



CGW's guide to

PC SPORTS



PIGSKIN PLAYOFFS'98

We preview all the upcoming football sims—and pick the winners and losers.

6



AUTO RACING

Get in gear for three new racing sims, burning rubber towards your PC this fall.

20



GOLF WAR!

So many golf games, so little time. Let our golf pro tell you which to buy.

23



BASEBALL STRATEGY

Tired of getting shut out? Read our baseball strategies and be an MVP instead.

36

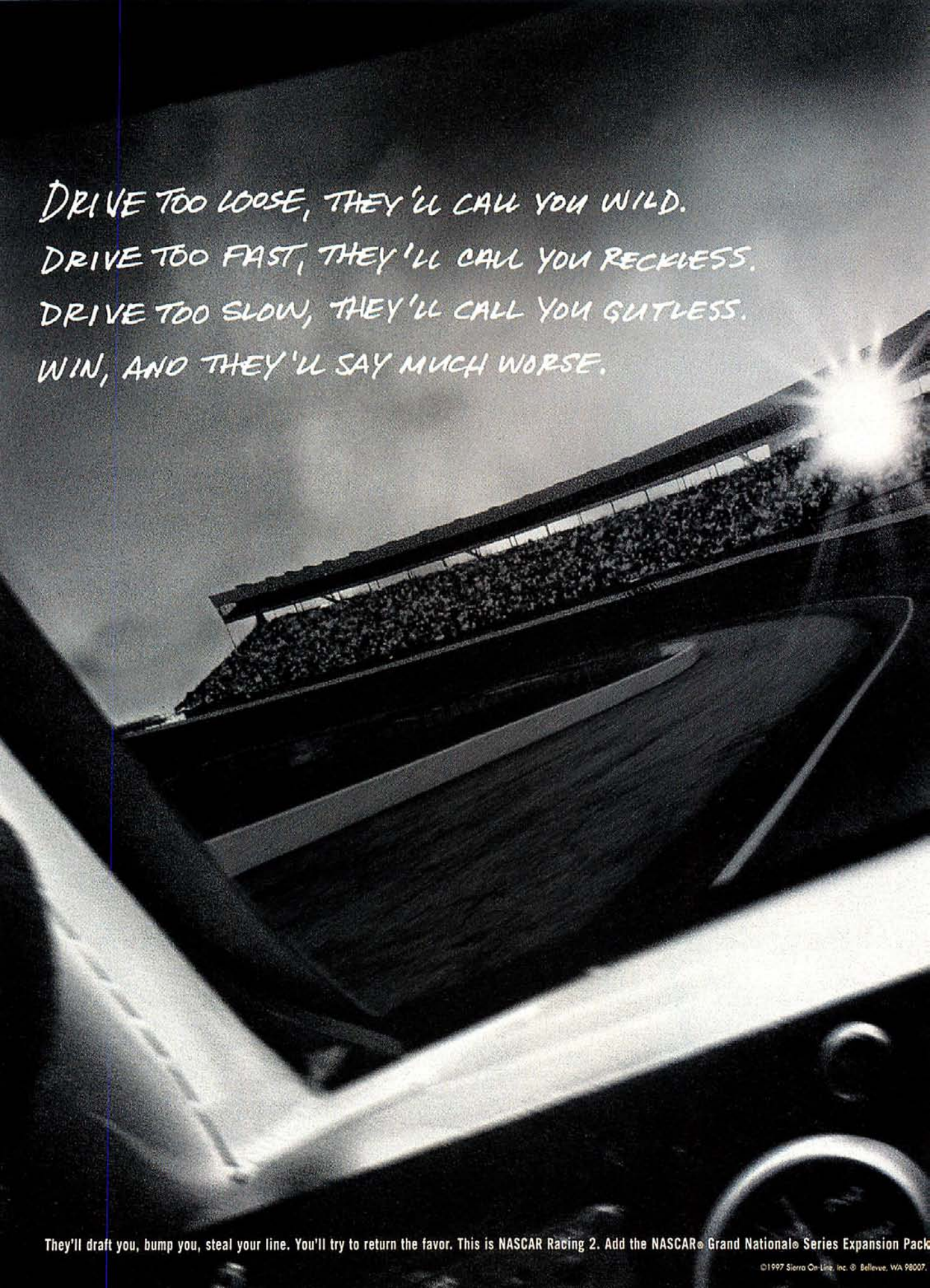


SCORECARD

Your one-stop, comprehensive list of CGW's 1997 sports games reviews.

42

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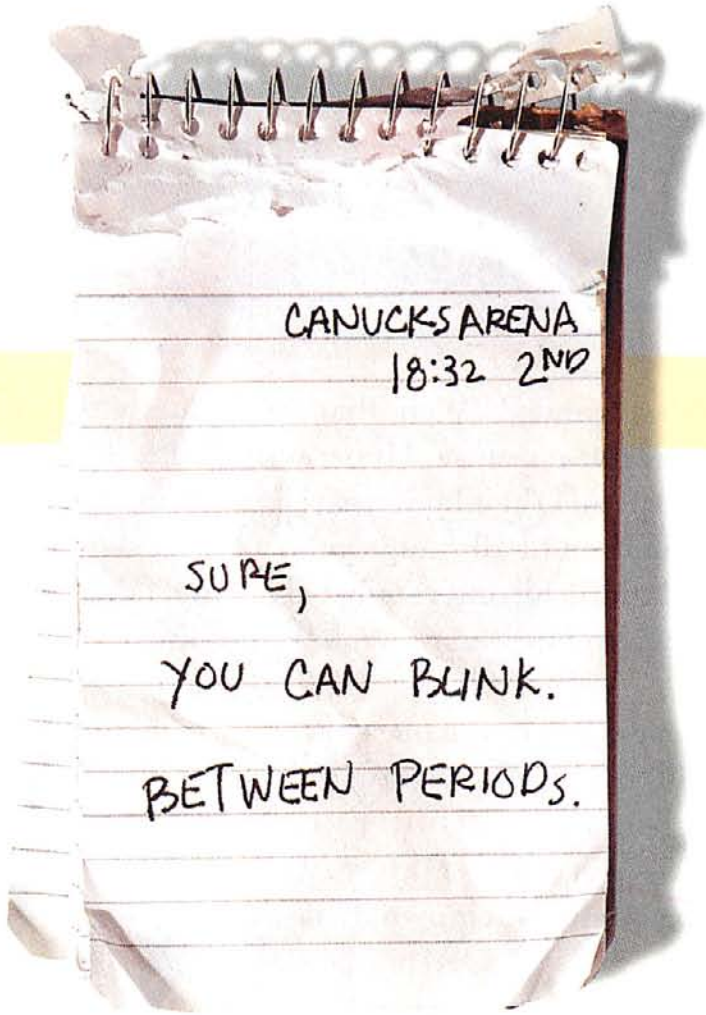
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PIGSKIN PLAYOFFS '98

by Dennis McCauley

"Show me the football games!" Well, that's not exactly the famous line from Jerry Maguire, but it's close. Hyperactive NFL wide receiver Cuba Gooding, Jr. spends the film in search of kwan, his word for that mystical combination of all things good. With a slew of big-name football simulations hitting retail shelves this fall, sports gamers have a chance to find their own brand of kwan, pigskin style.

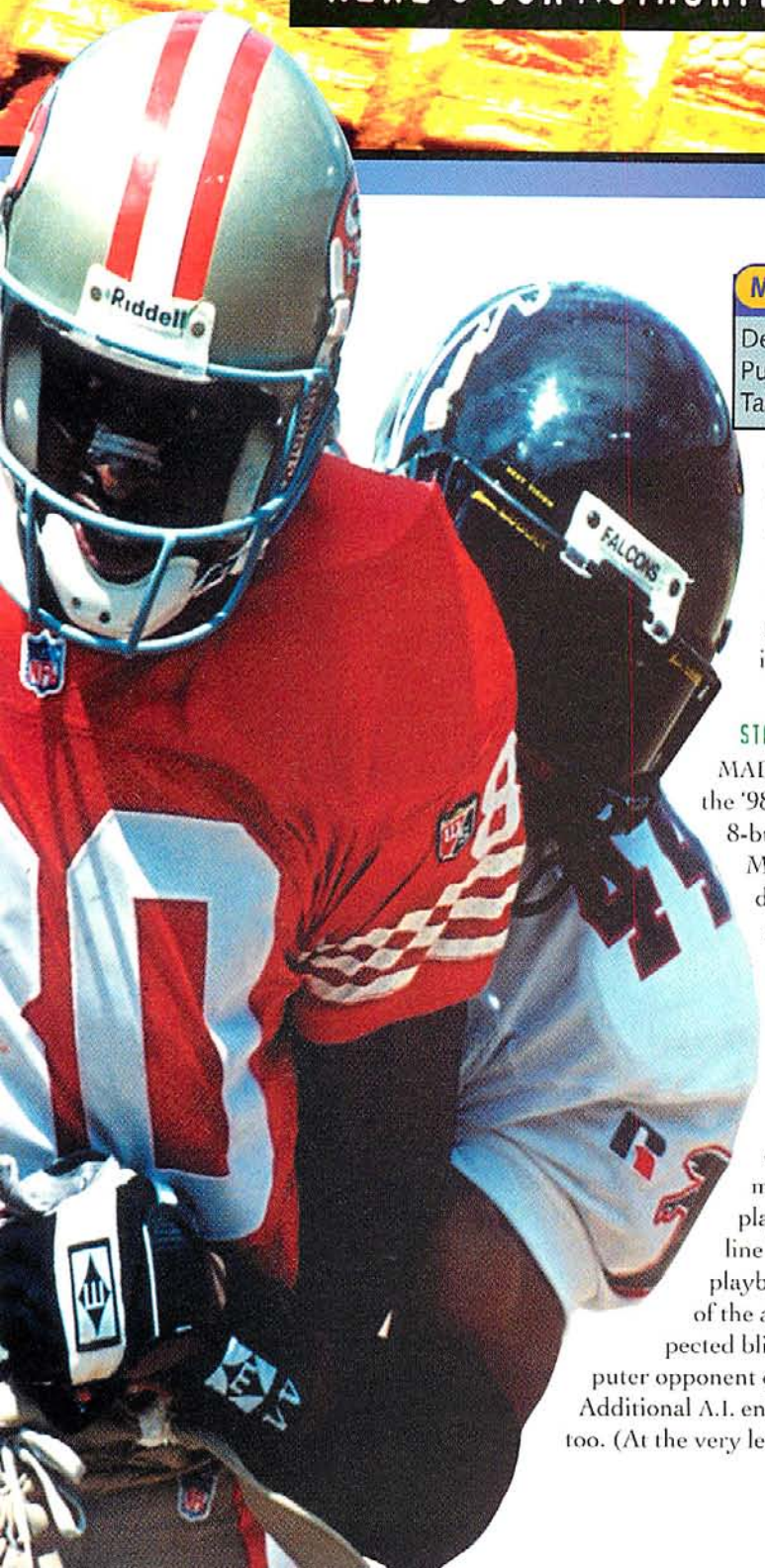
NFL junkies will have five new games to choose from to get their pro football fix. Arcade All-Pros will blister their fingers on Acclaim's NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB and EA Sports' MADDEN NFL 98, while would-be GMs can assemble their own dynasties with Sierra's FRONT PAGE SPORTS: FOOTBALL PRO 98. Accolade has opened an NFL time warp with LEGENDS FOOTBALL 98, which features action in four eras, from 1932 to last Sunday. ABC captures the magic of prime time with MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL 98.

Prefer the rah-rah, sis-boom-bah of college football to the pro game? Both EA Sports and ABC Interactive are debuting hotly anticipated college sims. EA follows the action-oriented formula that made them famous with NCAA FOOTBALL, while ABC hits the sports nostalgia road in HEROES OF THE GRIDIRON.

The good news is that each sim features a mix of strategy, stats, action, and play calling. The bad news? With a roster of games this exciting, your choice won't be easy. So check out our in-depth previews, and find the game that fits your definition of kwan.

SEVEN HOT NEW FOOTBALL SIMS ARE KICKING OFF THIS YEAR.

HERE'S OUR AUTHORITATIVE SCOUTING REPORT



Game Plan-

Madden NFL 98

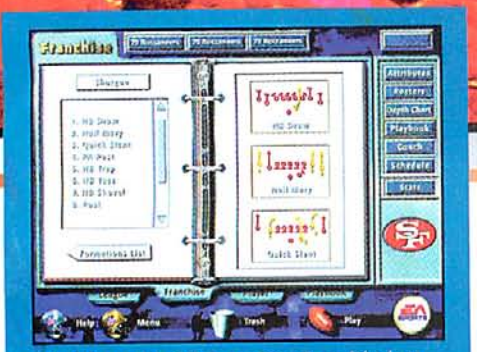
Developer: Stormfront Studios
Publisher: EA Sports
Target Release Date: January '98

Is traditionally arcade-oriented JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL hearing the footsteps of competitors that emphasize coaching and statistics? Could be, as the veteran MADDEN design team has channeled its energy into beefing up last year's best-selling football game. Expect this year's MADDEN to be a more robust all-around simulation that still captures the essential MADDEN virtues of fast-paced, good-looking NFL action.

STRENGTHS

MADDEN has always been strong on arcade play, and the '98 edition will be no different, with support for up to 8-button joysticks. This time around, however, the All-Madden Team will strut its stuff in beautifully rendered 3D stadiums. The players themselves are drawn in what EA Sports calls "V-Poly," a hybrid of 2D and 3D renderings, using multiple sprites for the players' arms and legs. You can view the action from a flexible array of camera angles.

MADDEN's computer players should be smarter this time around, with improved A.I., especially among linemen. Once relegated to simplistically attacking a given area, the big lugs now employ more sophisticated blocking techniques to suit the play that's being run. There are more choices at the line of scrimmage as well, with enhanced, team-specific playbooks that simulate the offensive and defensive styles of the actual NFL teams. And watch out for those unexpected blitzing linebackers—this time around the wily computer opponent can call defensive audibles at the line of scrimmage. Additional A.I. enhancements should make computer coaches smarter too. (At the very least you can depend on them not to carry guns into



Madden NFL 98 promises to add playbook depth to its popular arcade play.

the airport!) What you can look for are more complex coaching scripts that will guide your opponent's decisions as they match gridiron wits against you.

While MADDEN doesn't offer a career mode, it provides an NFL-style schedule generation utility which gives coaches the opportunity to play multiple seasons, albeit with the same cast of players. The game does permit trading, however, and the computer G.M.'s ability to haggle over talent has been improved. Salary cap considerations add a welcome element of realism to the player personnel aspect of this year's game.

With full NFL licensing, MADDEN offers complete rosters for all 30 professional teams. Gamers who grow weary of the 1997 players will find plenty of classic teams included from distant eras. While the lineup of older clubs hadn't been finalized at press time, the design team may reach as far back as the leather helmet days of the 1920's. After all, Bronco Nagurski and Jim Thorpe would make nice additions to the All-Madden Team.

And what would this game be without Madden himself? The famed coach and color analyst is back with more lessons from Madden University. Using his trademark Telestrator, Big John will discuss play design, and offer insights on the classic teams.

MADDEN 98 offers arcade and coach mode against the computer, as well as modem and Internet play. EA Sports has made arrangements with MPlayer that will allow owners to do their Internet gaming there for free. Unfortunately, Internet play is coach-only, as latency issues preclude the use of a joystick. On the plus side, expect additional A.I. enhancements in Internet games, including a coaching editor that won't be available in the single-player version. X-and-O freaks will appreciate the ability to design and swap plays online.

While there's no support planned for 3D accelerators, a patch may be released for the more popular cards later on. 3D shouldn't be a major concern, however, since the game's hardware demands are not steep, a design decision aimed at making the game accessible to the masses (something that didn't quite happen with the previous version). Theoretically, MADDEN should perform very well on a P100 or better.

WEAKNESSES

MADDEN 98 stole the show at E3 with its attractive graphics and ambitious features. It looks like a clear winner in this year's football gaming playoffs—provided it makes it out of the locker room. With release scheduled for January—that is, at the end of the football season—there's not much room for error. It would be a shame if delays somehow kept MADDEN off the field this year.

WHAT'S NEW

Internet play, 8-button game pad support, Win95 code, improved A.I., enhanced Madden University.

PREDICTED FINISH: 1ST

Game Plan-

Legends Football '98

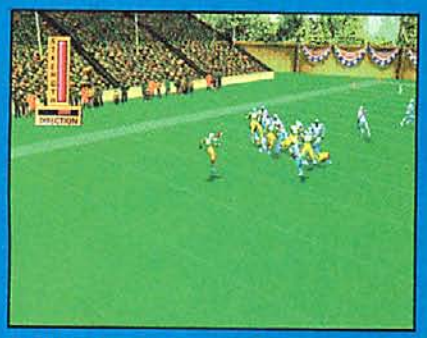
Developer: Saffire
Publisher: Accolade
Target Release Date: September '97

Riding the strength of what may be the coolest concept to hit sports gaming in years, LEGENDS FOOTBALL '98 could be the smash hit of the upcoming gridiron season. What makes this game so intriguing to football fans? How about Red Grange blitzing Dan Marino, or Johnny Unitas throwing the deep post against Deion Sanders? LEGENDS offers authentic NFL action that spans four distinct eras: 1932, 1950, 1968, and today. Gamers can generate cross-era matchups, or stay within their favorite time period. The opportunity to experiment with the effects of NFL rules changes and the evolution of offensive and defensive strategy makes LEGENDS '98 an NFL time capsule and a football simulation rolled into one.

STRENGTHS

LEGENDS should thrill hardcore NFL fans with its cross-era play. The design team has packed an enviable amount of historical research into the game. Coaches can select teams as well as the era in which they do battle. For instance, you could easily match up the '97 Super Bowl champion Packers against the 1932 Green Bay team. What's more, you could play the contest using either today's rules, or those of '32. Your decision will have a massive impact on both gameplay and strategy.

For example, rosters were limited to 20 players in 1932. Coach in that run-oriented era, and you'll have million-dollar MVP QB Brett Favre crashing shoulder pads on both offense and defense against his leather-helmeted opposition. Due to 1932's lack of hash marks, you may



Butt heads with some of the greatest players of the century in Legends Football '98.



Monday Night Football returns with a much better game plan and execution than last year's version.

find your tight end snapping the ball at the sideline.

You'll notice other significant rules changes as you time travel through LEGENDS' different epochs. The placement of the goal posts at the back of the end zone between the 1968 and modern eras added ten yards to field goal distance, and ended the dominant role of place kickers. Moving the hash marks closer to the center of the field helped open up today's passing game. Wouldn't Hall of Fame QB Slingin' Sammy Baugh love to air it out in today's wide-open offensive style? Accolade's game may provide answers to such "what-if" questions.

LEGENDS 98 features 3D graphics and multiple camera perspectives for good-looking NFL action. The screen views pan, tilt, and zoom on the fly, so gamers can check out the action from their favorite angle. Support is provided for a variety of controllers, including Gravis GRiP and Microsoft Sidewinder gamepads. 3D renditions of all 30 current NFL parks are included, as well as representative stadiums for each of the historical eras. Period flavor is enhanced by team uniform changes as you progress through time. While the 1932 players are a drab bunch, clad in leather helmets and earth tones, by 1968 players had evolved into the colorful, heavily armored gladiators we associate with the sport today.

The game tracks a variety of individual and team statistics, and also offers league management functions, including a career mode in which players are drafted, age, and retire. Coaches can tinker with the LEGENDS playbooks, or roll their own with the game's play editor utility. Gamers can also scrimmage cross-country, as well as cross-era, using LEGENDS' options for modem, LAN, serial, or Internet play.

WEAKNESSES

LEGENDS was originally scheduled for release last year, but stalled in development. The state of the gaming art has taken several quantum leaps since that time. Will the game's design show any ill effects of its long delay? And, while LEGENDS offers a coach mode in addition to arcade play, the producer's primary orientation is toward entertainment. Look for an emphasis on action rather than strategy and statistics. Finally, the task of accurately rating players—especially linemen from the 1930's—is fraught with subjectivity. Don't expect 100 percent historical accuracy in the cross-era play, but savor the chance to coach the likes of Bronco Nagurski, Crazy Legs Hirsch, and Gale Sayers.

PREDICTED FINISH: 2ND

Game Plan

ABC Monday Night Football '98

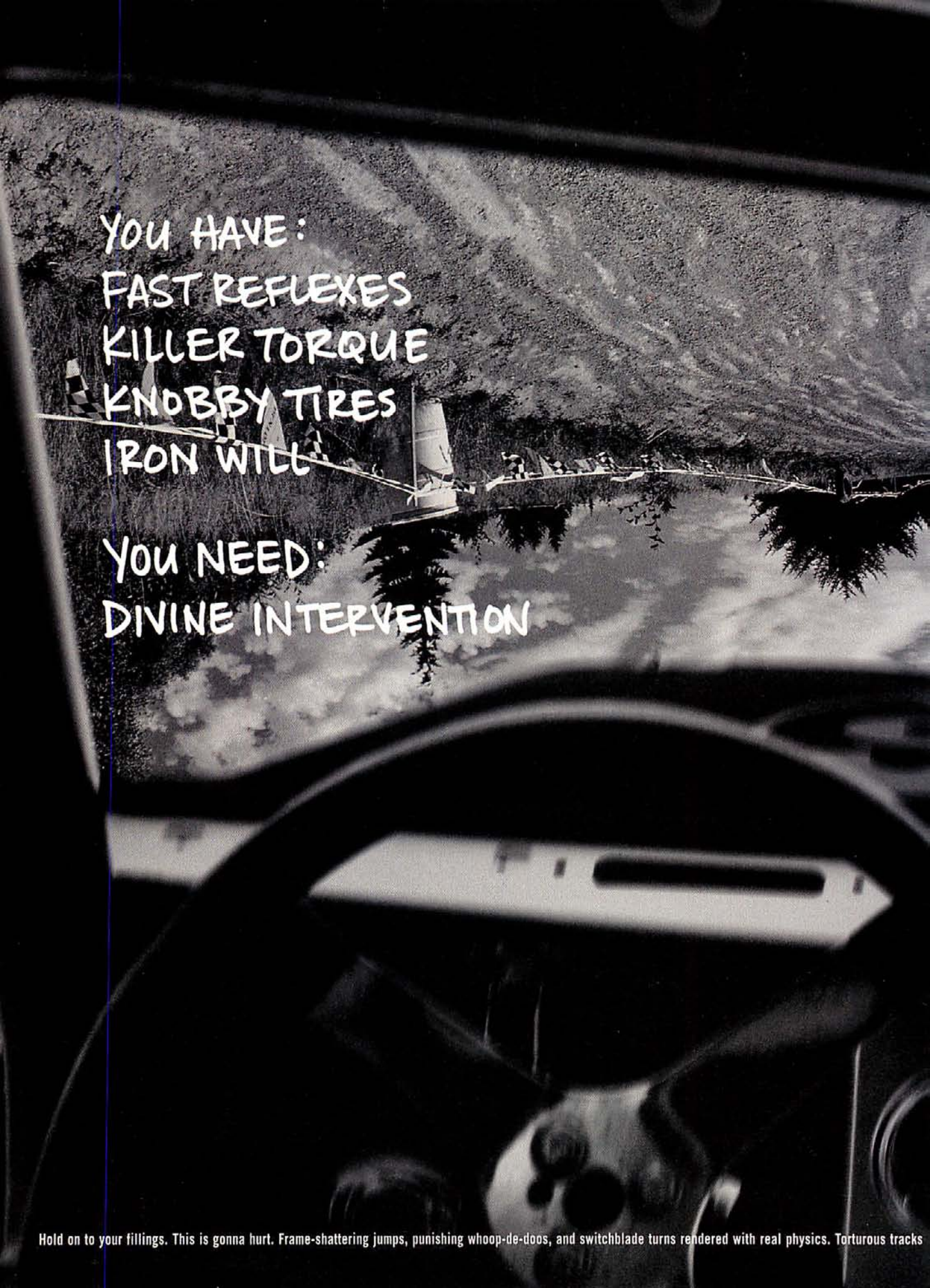
Developer: OT Sports
Publisher: ABC Interactive
Target Release Date: August '97

ABC Interactive and OT Sports are back with MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL '98, the second edition of a game that failed to live up to expectations in its debut last season. Things are looking up for the MNF franchise, however, with vastly improved graphics, better sound quality, less system drain, and well-supported multiplayer options.

STRENGTHS

Are you ready for some football? Let's hope so, because MNF '98 seems poised to give MADDEN and LEGENDS a serious run for the crown this year. Unlike last year, MNF's pluses encompass more than just its famous announcing trio of Al Michaels, Dan Dierdorf, and Frank Gifford. To be sure, the Monday Night broadcast team is back in the booth, offering insightful play-by-play commentary, as well as providing a brief pre-game show. Add in appearances by Chris Berman (yes, he's back-back-back) and Lynn Swann, and the game captures that MNF mood perfectly.

MNF 98 is much better looking than its predecessor. Player graphics are larger and crisper, with uniforms that feature numbers, stripes, and helmet logos. There is also more stadium detail, although the venues themselves seem generic. Last year's unwieldy play-calling interface has been upgraded. Coaches can now quickly select their basic formation, then scroll to the play of their choice. MNF has thankfully retained the slick play-design interface that was last year's saving grace, since the game's ability to generate plays on the fly is a real plus.



Hold on to your fillings. This is gonna hurt. Frame-shattering jumps, punishing whoop-de-doos, and switchblade turns rendered with real physics. Torturous tracks


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EA Sports' newest roster member is NCAA Football, which promises to bring fast-paced arcade action to the college football field.

MNF offers gamers their choice of arcade, coach, or spectator mode, and its multiplayer options are hard to beat. This year, OT Sports and the Mplayer network have teamed up to offer a free matchup service where Bill Parcells wanna-bes can go to find live opponents. Gamers can also update their rosters weekly through Stats Inc.

OT Sports reports that the A.I. problems that sank last year's edition have been overcome. Computer-controlled teams should now make more intelligent playbook selections, and should adapt to tendencies of human coaches.

WEAKNESSES

MNF offers no career mode. Requires display settings at 16-Bit hi-resolution color.

WHAT'S NEW

MNF's Auto-match-up service for Net gaming; vastly improved player sprites; improved artificial intelligence.

PREDICTED FINISH: 3RD

Game Plan-

NCAA Football

Developer: MBL Research
Publisher: EA Sports
Target Release Date: October '97

NCAA FOOTBALL is a new title from EA Sports that goes after the pomp, pageantry, and hard-hitting action of the college game. A different breed of game from MADDEN, NCAA features a completely new game engine, and has an entirely different look and feel than its NFL cousin. While MADDEN aims for a T.V.-style presentation, NCAA puts gamers in the stadium and on the field, where they'll sense the excitement and school spirit that is the hallmark of big-time college football.

STRENGTHS

Gamers will have their choice of 112 Division I-A teams for single games or complete seasons. All of the major college football programs are represented, with authentic school colors, logos, and fight songs. The teams use 1997 roster data, and will compile single-game and full-season stats in over 60 categories. NCAA provides the ability to scout upcoming opponents, and gamers can customize their schedule, or use the 1997 version included with the game.

Each team in NCAA has an authentic playbook designed by former UCLA coach and current TV analyst Terry Donohue. Coach Nebraska and you'll be running from the Power-I formation. Take on Tennessee, and prepare to face a blistering pro-style passing attack. Want to transform run-oriented Oklahoma into a passing team? Just do it. In NCAA, gamers can customize playbooks and formations to their liking.

For post-season action, NCAA has exclusive rights to several major games, including the Orange, Sugar, Fiesta, and Rose Bowls. Gamers can also try to alter the course of college football history with bonus replays of 20 classic bowl matchups.

A native Win95 game, NCAA requires a P133 or better for acceptable performance. The game's multiplayer options include serial and modem action, as well as up to 5-player support for LAN play.

WEAKNESSES

A career mode with recruiting didn't make it into the final PC version. An option for a playoff system would have also been nice, but was nixed due to licensing tie-ins with the major bowl games. Players are accurately represented, but nameless, identified only by jersey number. The lack of Internet play is understandable, due to latency issues associated with joystick games, but disappointing nonetheless.

PREDICTED FINISH: 4TH

Game Plan-

Heroes of the Gridiron

Developer: OT Sports
Publisher: ABC Interactive
Target Release Date: August '97

It's hog heaven for college football fans. While EA's NCAA FOOTBALL simulates today's college action, ABC's HEROES OF THE GRIDIRON is firmly rooted in the past. The game is almost entirely based on the MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL engine, and offers licensed versions of 32 of the top Division I-A schools. The teams are stocked with the best players at their respective positions from the past four decades. Southern Cal, for example, might feature Frank Gifford and Marcus Allen in the same backfield. Your Notre Dame team could have Joe Theismann and Rick Mirer competing for the starting job at QB.



Last season's biggest surprise, Acclaim's QB Club returns with better, deeper football action.

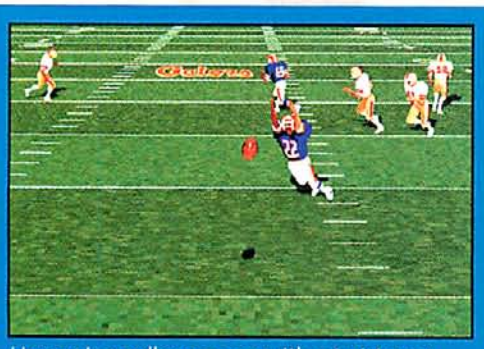
STRENGTHS

Since HEROES is essentially MNF in a varsity sweater, it bears a strong family resemblance to its NFL big brother. This includes attractive, detailed player sprites, an easy-to-use play editor, and the ability to match up with other coaches via the Internet. Oddly enough, HEROES may be the first college game to feature real NFL players among its more than 1,700 top all-time college stars. The ability to move the players between rosters creates an array of interesting fantasy team possibilities.

OT Sports went to some lengths to create an NCAA flavor with HEROES. Each team's fight song is available, as is historical background on the universities. The presence of ABC's longtime college football commentator Keith Jackson and former Purdue All-American Bob Griese add to the Saturday afternoon look-and-feel of the game's interface. The inclusion of playbooks featuring the Wing T, Double Wishbone, and Option offenses are yet another tip-off that you're not playing in Detroit or Green Bay anymore.

WEAKNESSES

While HEROES OF THE GRIDIRON looks as good as its pro sibling, it's almost too similar. Do the college teams and playbooks justify an entirely new game, rather than an add-on module to MNF? Fans will have to decide that one for themselves. Another personal choice revolves around the "heroes" concept, which limits the game to an all-star fantasy realm. Gamers who want to try their hand at authentic college replays or who would like to experiment with recruiting will have to look elsewhere—say, in EA's direction.



Heroes is a college game with a twist: you can coach more than 1,700 of the top all-time, real-life college players.

PREDICTED FINISH: 5TH

Game Plan-

NFL Quarterback Club '98

Developer: Iguana
Publisher: Acclaim
Target Release Date: October '97

Despite being a console game ported to the PC, Acclaim's NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB was a pleasant surprise among last season's crop of football games. Now QB CLUB is back, and may once again give the big name sims a run for their money.

STRENGTHS

NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB '98 brings full NFL credentials to the party, with Packers' MVP Brett Favre serving as the game's poster boy. Of course, you'll need someplace to stash all those officially licensed players, so QB CLUB includes 3D renderings of all 30 NFL stadiums. While the game offers plenty of stats, its primary focus is on arcade elements, with gameplay available at three difficulty settings. The game supports up to six players in any combination via linked controllers, so the action can get fast and furious once the ball is snapped. QB CLUB '98 uses motion-captured player sprites with uniform numbers and names appearing on the jerseys. Coaches can update their rosters weekly via Acclaim's web site.

Would-be general managers will find plenty to occupy them in QB CLUB, which permits trading, drafting, and free-agent signings. Gamers also have the option to create a player, or even an entire team. (Why not put yourself on your favorite team?) QB CLUB '98 allows you to play only the games you choose, while the computer simulates the remainder of the schedule.

If you like the variety of a hefty playbook, QB CLUB is for you, with over 1,000 stock plays available. Unfortunately, there's no way to edit or to design your own. Each team comes with ten signature plays, however, so watch out for Jerry Rice on the slant pattern when you're up against the 49ers.

WEAKNESSES

With all of the big ticket sims offering substantial arcade elements along with in-depth league management tools and play editors, can a pure arcade game compete? Sure, if last year's success is any indication. On the other hand, QB CLUB remains DOS-based, while the competition has migrated to the relative techno-ease of Win95 gaming. Of greater concern, however, is the game's lack of modem or Internet play options.



A new, more friendly interface is one of the changes to this year's FPS Football Pro.

WHAT'S NEW

Updated engine, enhanced playbook with plays designed by Brett Favre, more robust stats and roster management.

PREDICTED FINISH: 6TH

Game Plan

Front Page Sports Football Pro '98

Developer: Synergistics
Publisher: Sierra On-Line
Target Release Date: September '97

As close to a dynasty as it gets in the sports gaming world, Sierra's FRONT PAGE SPORTS: FOOTBALL PRO series has enjoyed an unprecedented five-year reign as front-runner among gridiron simulations. All that changes this season, however. Much like an NFL team hampered by salary cap restrictions, FRONT PAGE is going through a badly needed rebuilding year. What gamers will see in the '98 version is essentially a dressed-up version of the same game that earned a 4.5 star review in *Computer Gaming World* last season. That is, it'll be good, but as measured by last year's standards. To their credit, Sierra has tacitly acknowledged this by offering the game at a very reasonable $29.95 list price.

STRENGTHS

FRONT PAGE SPORTS: FOOTBALL PRO rightfully earned its place in the sports gaming Hall of Fame by combining the best elements of arcade action with realistic statistics and league management tools. Using a physics-based game engine, FPS: FOOTBALL rates players across eight categories such as strength, intelligence, speed, and throwing ability. Armchair coaches can utilize hundreds of stock offensive, defensive, and special teams plays included with the game, or use FPS' robust play editor to craft their own blitzes, traps, and screens.

Once the plays are designed, gamers can draw up a game plan, and test their coaching mettle against a computer opponent, or take on live opposition via e-mail, modem, or the Internet. Coaches who haven't the time for extensive tinkering with their playbook can take advantage of major improvements to the stock plays included with the game. Sierra called on play-design experts to tweak the X's and O's. In addition, NFL backup QB Will Furrer was employed to craft team-specific playbooks for all 30 NFL clubs. As a result, the available formations and plays should reflect each team's persona. Look for the 49ers to line up in the West Coast offense, while the Steelers come roaring at you with their blitzing 3-4 defensive set. And if life on the bomb squad is your style, take heart. This year's edition offers the ability to edit special teams play for the first time.

The game offers the ability to control any player on the field, or just sit back and coach while the computer does the grunt work. Games can be left entirely to the CPU, in fact, allowing users to simulate as many or as few games as they choose. This is a handy feature if you want to control just one team while letting the rest of the league schedule play itself out.

Perhaps the most engaging feature of FRONT PAGE SPORTS: FOOTBALL PRO is its career mode. Team ownership can continue from season to season, with individual skills improving or declining as the players gain experience, age, or even retire. Prior to each campaign, the game generates fictitious rookies and conducts a draft, allowing coaches to restock their rosters. Next comes training camp, where decisions have to be made regarding the allocation of training time. In this way, your team's character evolves over time, much like real NFL clubs.

Game interface screens are more colorful and easier to navigate than in the past. FPS: FOOTBALL PRO '98 also enhances the game's league management utilities. Commissioners of the numerous online leagues will be excited by the ability to export HTML formatted data directly from the game to a league web page, making rosters, schedules, injury reports, trades, and draft picks much easier to handle.

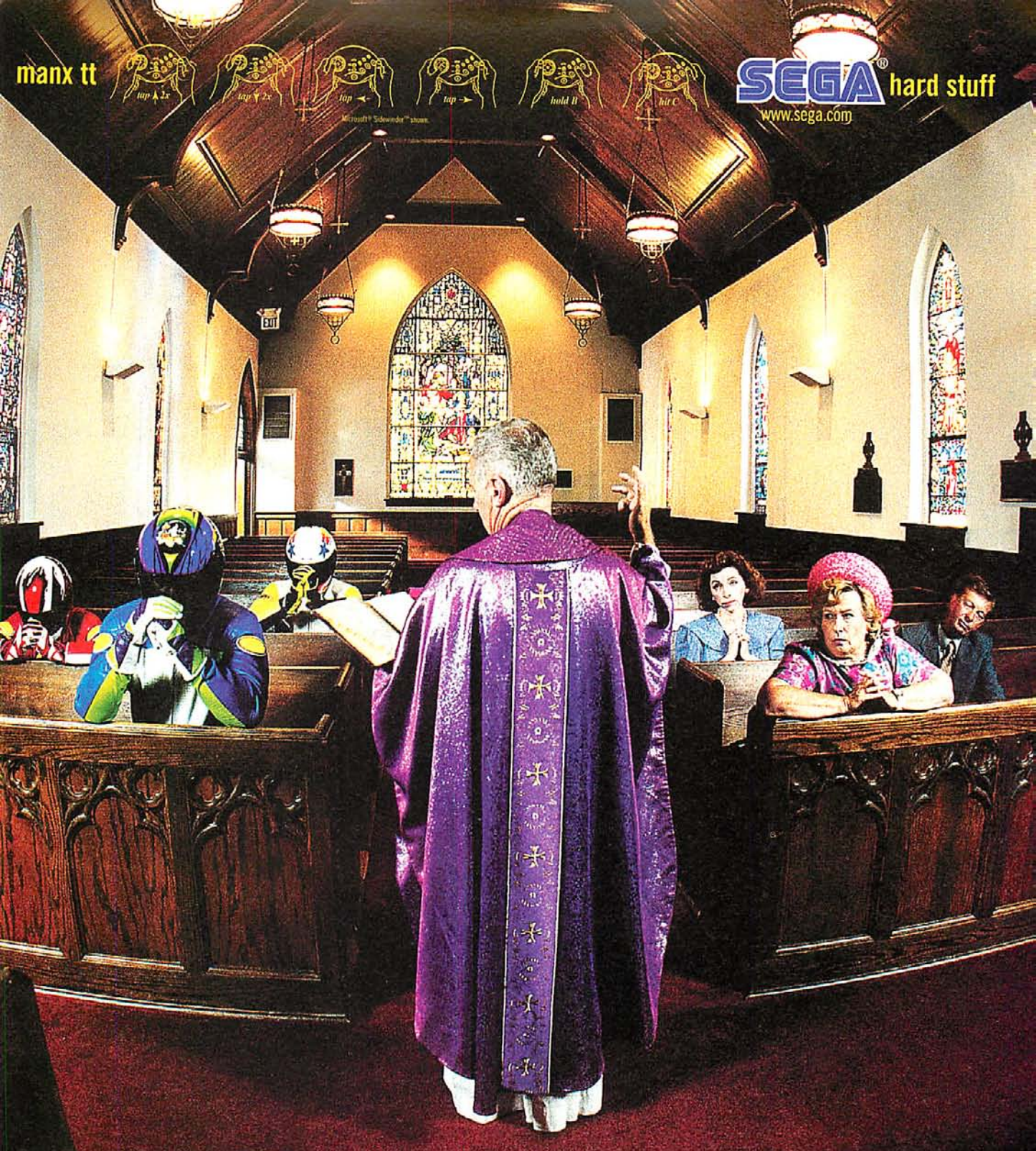
WEAKNESSES

With FPS' Windows 95 game engine pretty much untouched from last year, gamers are primarily getting enhanced cosmetics patched onto the old engine. But it may be the gaming industry's worst-kept secret that Sierra is really putting their energy into a complete makeover of FPS: FOOTBALL for the '99 edition.

WHAT'S NEW

Better stock plays, cleaner user interface, HTML output for league management, improved stadium graphics. And, for the first time, Dynamix is not developing a FRONT PAGE SPORTS title, as Sierra subsidiary Synergistics (TRIPLE PLAY 97) takes the helm.

PREDICTED FINISH: 7TH ■



Pray to the motorcycle gods. Manx TT, the killer arcade game, is now on PC. Pick from 8 custom built SuperBikes. Gun it down one of the most treacherous race tracks on the planet, England's Isle of Man. And try not to scrape your knees off through the turns. Just so you can feel it all in your gut, we've recreated every last bump and dip on the road. Equipped with 8 player Network Play over IPX and TCP/IP so you can race other speed freaks across the country. Get down on your knees.











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NDS
daytona® USA deluxe
On "Gentlemen, Start Your Engines" Screen
hold xy
hold yz
hold xz
Microsoft® Sidewinder™ shown.

As stock car racers say, "If you can't beat 'em with skill, beat 'em with a root vegetable." Welcome to the white-knuckled world of Daytona® USA Deluxe, the phenomenal 3D sequel to the hit arcade game, now on PC. 8 different stock cars. 6 heart pounding courses. An all new track. And network play means up to 7 of your buddies can eat your rubber at once. Plus with Force Feedback support, you'll feel every bumper kiss and wall bounce. Gentlemen, start your engines. If you can.

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nba® action 98
tap Z
tap X
aim at hoop
tap B
SEGA®
hard stuff
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Microsoft® Sidewinder™ shown.

Some people go to extremes to play NBA® Action 98. They should. In this game, you're up against guys who'd like nothing better than to pound your puny torso into the court. We're talking every NBA player, every NBA team, all 29 Arenas. Team specific plays. Behind the back passes. Alley oops. It's all here. Chick Hearn even calls the plays. NBA Action 98. See how you measure up.
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Racing into the Winner's Circle

by Johnny L. Wilson

Three New Auto Racing Sims Rev Up For The Fall

Racing is the perfect blend between technological sophistication and human skill. Engine, chassis, tire, and aerodynamics are designed to space-age specifications. Computer-aided fuel management can make the difference between a winning and losing performance—just ask the Pac-West racing team, whose two drivers ran out of fuel in the last lap of this year's Detroit Grand Prix. But winning still requires the daring skills of drivers who know how and when to make the right moves, with split-second precision, in the midst of fast and intense competition.

Naturally, successful computer racing games allow you to find the winning edge in both ways: setting up your car to the limit of existing technology and making the right moves against either a challenging AI or other human opponents. This year promises to be better than ever for racing sim fans, with three serious new games that should press INDYCAR RACING II, NASCAR II and GRAND PRIX RACING II—the reigning champions of the computer racing world—for dominance.

Start Your Engines

All three sims take seriously the technology underpinning modern professional racing. Bethesda's X-CAR EXPERIMENTAL RACING (now shipping) not only features dynamite graphics and sound (complete with doppler effect), and a fascinating mixture between real and imaginary tracks and cars, but the most detailed telemetry read-outs ever seen in a racing game. Since the game deals largely with concept cars, it also features a variety of test tracks in order to really shake down each model.

As for open-wheel racing—the high-performance modern descendant of the wheel-to-wheel chariot duels of the Roman Era—both Microsoft's CART PRECISION RACING (due first quarter '98) and ABC Interactive's ABC SPORTS INDYCAR RACING: ROAD TO INDIANAPOLIS (due this Christmas), feature serious physics models, celebrity licenses representing both drivers and racing teams, and sophisticated car set-up options (see chart, page 22).

In terms of human opponents, all three sims feature multiplayer options. X-CAR only allows modem-to-modem or IPX play, however, while both ABC and CART have Internet strategies built into the products. In the case of the latter two, you can expect to eventually be able to sign up to compete in racing leagues via the Internet.

All three sims know that the bottom line of any racing game is to have fun. So, all three allow you to set the race lengths for a comfortable duration, and have options for beginning a race immediately or going

Player Assistance

Type	X-Car	CART	ABC
Braking	Yes	Yes	Yes
Automatic Transmission	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cued Shifting	No	Yes	No
Turn-in Assist	Yes	Yes	Yes
Visible Race Line	Yes	Yes	Yes
Spinout Control	Yes	Yes	No

through a full qualifying weekend of racing. Each has provisions for driving a single race or competing throughout a full season. They also feature a wide array of player assistance options (see table, previous page). These options let you set the games from the simplest arcade game to extremely realistic physics models.

Graphically, all three games have solid 3Dfx support, enabling you to read the sponsorships on all of the cars, and even recognize the cars of Jimmy Vasser, Mark Blundell, and Hiro Matsushita in CART or Tony Stewart, Arie Luyendyk and Lyn St. James in ABC (only cars that have tobacco and liquor ads in real life will be altered for game use).

All of the games will also make the most of 3D technology with a plethora of optional camera angles. In addition, CART and ABC will hype up the racing action with voiceovers and/or movies of on-air celebrities like Bob Barcia of ESPN's CART coverage in the former and Paul Page, Jack Arute and Tom Sneva in the latter.



ABC Sports' Indycar Racing emphasizes the speed and spectacle of auto racing.



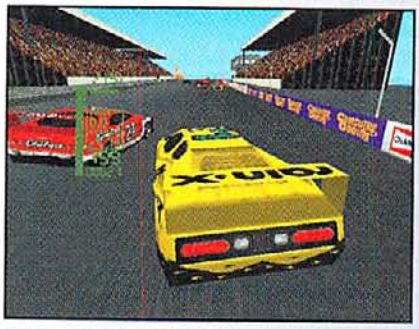
The IRT's many high speed ovals means faster average speeds than in CART.



CART's realism is intense; only the best will toggle off all the player assists.



Microsoft's CART has the toughest courses of any of the new racing sims.



Bethesda's X-CAR features a mix of real and imaginary tracks and cars.



X-CAR's full-physics mode makes the game tougher than racing a real car.

Lane Change

For all of their similarities, however, the three games each have a distinctive feel. X-CAR gives you some great crashes and a full-physics mode that's tougher than driving a real race car. Why is it tougher? In a real race car, you can feel the weight shift. In X-CAR (and CART, as well, for that matter), you have to deal with the physics of weight shift without the advantage of "feeling" it. Eventually, however, you find your driving line and start to imagine that you feel it.

CART gives you the feeling of competition. If you watch CART races, there is nothing more thrilling than being able to go wheel-to-wheel with a Parker Johnstone or Mauricio Gugelmin and make the pass. Plus, the CART courses are generally tougher than either those in the X-CAR or ABC games. So, you really pay with some serious damage whenever you turn off player assists before you're ready. It's a challenging, detailed, and, in advanced mode, unforgiving driver's game.

Finally, ABC tends to emphasize the spectacle and the speed. It focuses on spectacle with colorful movies and a

Realism Options

Type	X-Car	CART	ABC
Tire Wear	Yes	Yes	Yes
Head Panning	No	Yes	No
Fuel Consumption	No	Yes	Yes
Weather	Yes	Yes	Yes
Temperature Effects	No	Yes	Yes
Crash Damage	Yes	Yes	Yes



user interface completely built around the broadcast metaphor. Plus, some of the best camera angles are television views rather than driving views. Also, the number of high speed ovals in the IRL circuit forces ABC to have faster average speeds than those in CART (even though CART cars are more powerful).

Fortunately for gamers, it looks like the releases of these products will be staggered enough that racing fans will be able to enjoy all of them. I know I'm already enjoying the beta versions of all three games (and Bethesda's X-CAR was shipping as this supplement went to press). In fact, I think the best thing to have come out of the CART/IRL feud is the fact that two distinctive games with distinctive feels are coming onto the market. As auto racing continues to make inroads into mainstream mass appeal, it can only help but take its PC nephews along for the ride. With the already established presence of three great games—INDYCAR RACING II, NASCAR II and GRAND PRIX RACING II—these new titles are helping to usher in a new Golden Age of computer racing sims. ■

Set-up Options

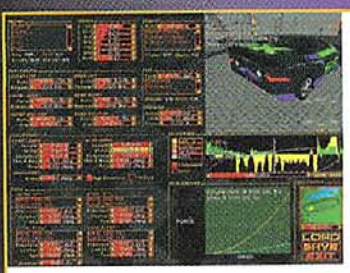
Option	X-Car	CART	ABC
Tires			
Tire Brand	No	No	Yes
Tire Compound	No	Yes	Yes
Tire Pressure	Yes	Yes	Yes
Suspension			
Toe	Yes	Yes	Yes
Camber	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sway (Anti-Roll) Bars	Yes	Yes	Yes
Spring Rates	No	Yes	Yes
Gears			
Gear Ratio	Yes	Yes	Yes
Engine			
Engine Brand	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chasis			
Chasis Brand	No	Yes	Yes
Wing Adjustment			
Front Left	Yes	No	Yes
Front Right	Yes	No	Yes
Gurney Flap Size	No	Yes	No
Static Ride Height	No	Yes	No
Rear	Yes	Yes	Yes
Brakes			
Brake Type	Yes	No	No
Brake Bias	Yes	Yes	No
Fuel			
Fuel Capacity	Yes	Yes	Yes
Steering			
Steer Ratio	Yes	Yes	No
Steer Lock	Yes	Yes	No
Tracks			
Number of Tracks	10	18	8



ABC's game is the lightest of the three, but still has robust car setups.



Tired of eating dust in CART? Supercharge your rig in the garage.

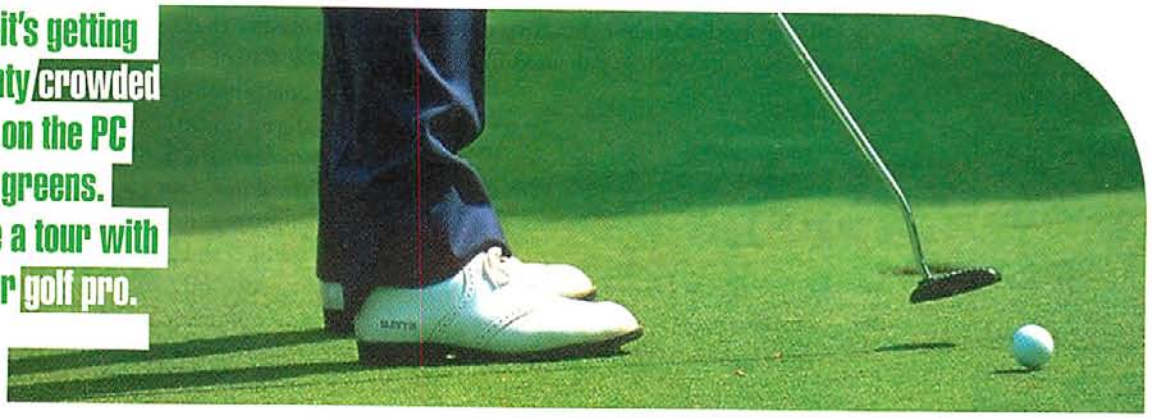


X-CAR features an incredibly deep array of set-up options.

Golf War!

By Scott A. May

No lie—it's getting mighty crowded on the PC greens. Take a tour with our golf pro.



Forget alien invaders and demon-infested dungeons. The year's most intense computer gaming battles are being waged on gentle fairways and peaceful greens. We're referring, of course, to the Golf Wars—an all-out blitz by software publishers to turn your PC into a digital country club.

Though somewhat unexpected, the current explosion of quality golf simulations should be welcome news to any sports fan. Faced with photorealistic graphics, course architects, and multiplayer online capabilities, today's computer golf games are nothing short of phenomenal. Some may sport more chrome and sizzle, but in the end, everyone's a winner in this battle of the links.

Here's a brief rundown of the best new golf sims to emerge this year.

British Open Championship Golf

Rating ★ ★ ★

$49.95 Publisher: Looking Glass Technologies

System Requirements: Pentium 60 (P90 recommended), Windows 95, 12 MB RAM (16 MB recommended), 40 MB free hard drive space.

Looking Glass, the high-flying publisher of FLIGHT UNLIMITED, makes the move from wild blue yonder to terra firma with BRITISH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF. It's a quality effort, but cast in the shadow of its feature-rich competitors, it feels somewhat mundane at times.

There are, however, some unique aspects to this game. For starters, Looking Glass is one of only two software publishers granted official license to use Scotland's historic St. Andrews course. It also heralds the return of designer Rex Bradford, creator of the infamous "swing meter," first used in Accolade's MEAN 18.



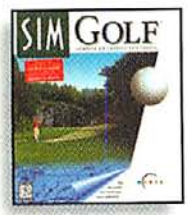
History aside, the first thing most jaded American sim-golfers will notice about this game is its scenery—or rather, the lack thereof. Graphics are well drawn and feature quick redraws between strokes, but beyond a few patches of trees and brush, the game's two courses are quite flat and barren, giving the whole experience a somewhat desolate look and feel.



FPS: Golf



PGA Tour Pro



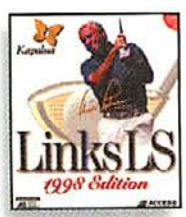
Sim Golf



British Open



Jack Nicklaus 4



Links LS 98



MS Golf 3.0

The game's best features are its ultra-realistic ball flight physics model, adjusting for wind, humidity, temperature, and surface texture. Then there's the absolutely vivid audio commentary by veteran sportscaster Jim McKay. Armed with more than 5,000 unique phrases, McKay's banter is seamless, giving the game much-needed personality.

Overall, BRITISH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF is a worthwhile simulation of two historic links. Unfortunately, the game's lack of amenities—remote multiplayer modes, course designer, and recorded play—ultimately pale next to its more dazzling rivals.

Front Page Sports: Golf

Rating ★ ★ ★ ★

$54.95 Publisher: Sierra On-Line

System Requirements: Pentium 60 (P90 recommended), Windows 95, 16 MB RAM (32 MB recommended), 25 MB free hard drive space (65 MB recommended).

Another newcomer to the digital greens, Sierra's long-delayed FPS: GOLF has survived the vaporware void and emerged victorious. By all indications, it was well worth the wait.

Designed by golf sim legend Vance Cook, best known for Access Software's WORLD CLASS LEADERBOARD and LINKS series, FPS: GOLF captures something uncommon to the genre: personality. From the intuitive interface to the innovative swing mechanics, this game just feels unique. And it's this sometimes intangible quality that sets it apart from the pack.

Graphics are photorealistic, utilizing a combination of digitized bitmaps, 3D-rendered objects, and texture-mapped polygon terrain. Unlike most other golf sims, the game uses polygonal golfers, not video-captured images. Though obviously less lifelike, the payoff comes with faster animation and a much wider range of motions (and emotions).

The game's biggest innovation is a new style of swing mechanics dubbed TrueSwing. Using the mouse as a virtual club, TrueSwing offers players real-time

Title	Publisher	Remote Play Options	Max # of Players *	# of Courses included
FPS: Golf	Sierra	Modem, LAN, ISP	64	2
PGA Tour Pro	Electronic Arts	Modem, LAN, ISP	80	3
Sim Golf	Maxis	Modem, LAN, ISP	4	2
British Open Championship Golf	Looking Glass Technologies	None	4	2
Jack Nicklaus 4	Accolade	Modem, Serial, LAN, ISP	8	5
Links LS 98	Access	Modem, Serial, LAN, ISP	8	4
Microsoft Golf 3.0	Microsoft	Modem, LAN, ISP	8	2

* Maximum players during Internet games.

** Some games have add-on courses planned, but are not yet available.

interactive control of backswing, power, and ball contact. Simply move the mouse backward to raise the club, and forward to strike. The animated golfer instantly reacts to your movement. The technique feels natural and is easy to learn.

Sierra's first golf sim is a definite winner, with key features like TrueSwing proving there's still room for innovation in this venerable sport.

Jack Nicklaus 4

Rating ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

$49.95 Publisher: Accolade

System Requirements: Pentium 90 (P-133 required for multiplayer games), Windows 95, 16 MB RAM, 171 MB free hard drive space.

The "Golden Bear" makes a triumphant return in Accolade's number one sports franchise, Jack Nicklaus 4. Everything you could ever hope for in a golf sim is included in this comprehensive package, which is an absolute model of perfection.

Talk about getting your money's worth, here's what you get in JN4: Five 18-hole courses, eight play styles, a full-blown course designer, course converter (for importing Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition courses) and a choice of four multiplayer modes (serial, modem, LAN, and Internet).

Eight available game styles won't leave you wanting for variety, including Best Score Championship, Best Score Handicap, Stroke Play, Match Play, Sudden Death, $1 Million Skins Challenge, Bingo Bango Bongo, and Certified Game (recorded Stroke Play for deferred mail or email matchups).

Accolade's proprietary height-mapping engine achieves incredible terrain realism, running at whatever maximum resolution and color depth your video card supports. Despite lush photorealistic graphics covering a full 2/3rds of the screen, redraws are brisk.

The icing on the cake is JN4's incredible course architect, modeled after Nicklaus Productions' own proprietary CAD system. Though a bit daunting for duffers, this menu-driven designer is extremely flexible, ensuring the game will enjoy long life on your hard drive. As a bonus, the architect can also import hundreds of user-created courses, freely available online.

JN4 definitely hits the high-water mark for computer golf sims. It just doesn't get much better than this.

Links LS 98 Edition

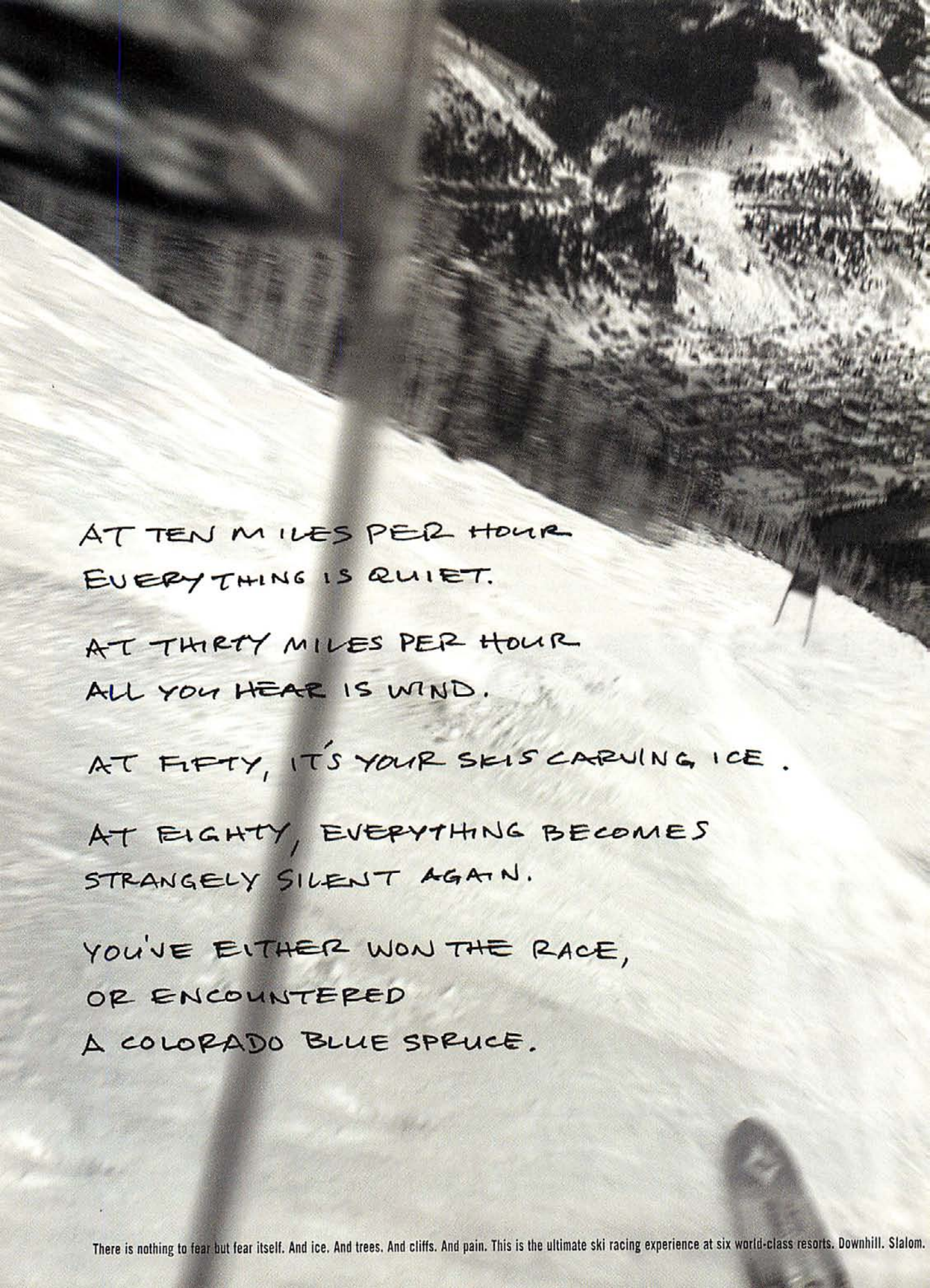
Rating ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

$79.95 Publisher: Access Software

System Requirements: Pentium 90, Windows 95 or NT 4.0, 16 MB RAM, 42 MB hard drive space.

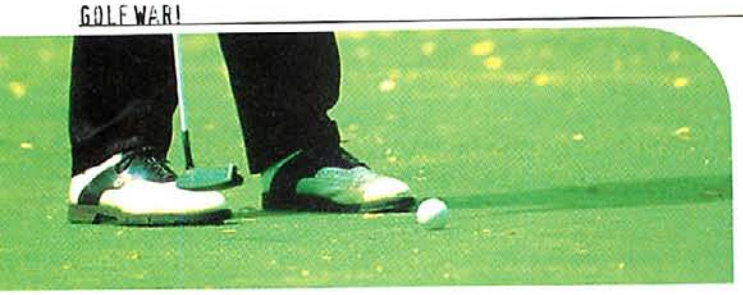
The seasoned veteran of the golf sim circuit, LINKS LS 1998 EDITION cruises the field like some luxury automobile: lavishly produced,

Add-on courses available? **	Course Architect?	Mouse Control	Types of Play
Yes	No	Swing meter (click) or TrueSwing (move)	12 - Practice; variations of medal, match play, Stableford, skins, scramble, and best ball
Yes; also compatible with previous version courses.	No	Swing meter (click)	5 - Practice, stroke, tournament, skins, and shoot-out
No	Yes	Swing meter (click) or MouseSwing (move)	4 - Practice, stroke, skins, and match play
No	No	Swing arc (click)	5 - Practice, stroke, best ball, match play, and multi-round tournaments
Yes; user-created courses, including Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition.	Yes	Swing arc (click)	8 - Best Score Championship, Best Score Handicap, Stroke Play, Match Play, Sudden Death, $1 Million Skins Challenge, Bingo Bango Bongo, and Certified Game
Yes; also compatible with all previous Links courses.	No	Swing meter (click)	7 - Practice, stroke, best ball, match play, skins, scramble, and alternate shot
Yes; also compatible with previous version courses, as well as Links Championship Courses.	No	Swing meter (click)	6 - Practice, instant start, stroke, match play, skins, and team best ball



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gold plated, and polished to perfection. Although the game may no longer be the genre's top contender, even detractors can't help but feel awed by its presence.

Perhaps feeling pressure from new competition, Access has wisely chosen not to rest on its laurels. The 1998 EDITION is a 4-disc extravaganza, designed to convey more than just the game of professional golf, but the entire lifestyle. Indeed, two entire discs are devoted to virtual tours of the Latrobe and Kapalua Resort courses, the Plantation Clubhouse, as well as host Arnold Palmer's office, workshop, and trophy room.

Still arguably the best-looking golf sim ever made, LINKS LS 1998 boasts more than 25 new features. Visual treats now include jaw-dropping water reflections, improved haze and fog effects, terrain microtexturing, and numerous extraneous goodies like blimps, balloons, airplanes, and waving flags. Despite all this window dressing, screen redraws are also significantly faster.

Other enhancements include 8 user-defined PIP (picture-in-picture) cameras, custom off-line (recorded) tournaments, two new modes of play (scramble and alternate shot), and fool-proof Internet play. The only dark cloud on the game's otherwise spotless horizon is its top-heavy system requirements. Running this game on anything less than a Pentium 133 is akin to swinging a golf club underwater.

LINKS LS 1998 may lack some key features now in demand—notably, a course architect—but in terms of overall style, it's still the gold standard in golf sims.

Microsoft Golf 3.0

Rating ★ ★ ★ ★

$39.95 Publisher: Microsoft

System Requirements: 486/66 MHz or higher, Windows 95 or Windows NT v3.51 or higher, 8 MB RAM, 25 MB hard drive space

The first golf sim for Windows receives a 32-bit facelift with the release of MICROSOFT GOLF 3.0, for Windows 95 and Windows NT. Designed by Access Software, based on their popular LINKS series, this new version offers fewer frills than its competitors, yet is by far the most polished of the bunch.

The game's most readily apparent improvement is its new 32-bit game engine, producing crisper animation, more fluid play, and almost instantaneous screen redraws. Also improved is the game's intuitive, context-rich interface, which uses the same model as Microsoft's other recent sports titles (FULL COURT PRESS, SOCCER).

Though only two courses are included with the game—Banff Springs and Harbour Town—GOLF 3.0 allows you to import greens from the vast collection of LINKS CHAMPIONSHIP COURSES. A separate, built-in converter automatically updates old courses to GOLF's new high-res format.

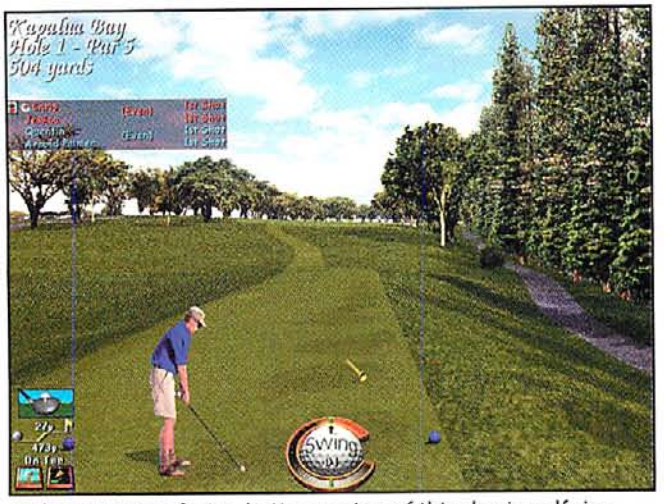
All in all, Microsoft Golf 3.0 plays it safe, pushing no boundaries in this crowded genre. If you're searching for innovation, look elsewhere; if you just want a rock-solid, no-nonsense golf sim, this is the one to get.

PGA Tour Pro

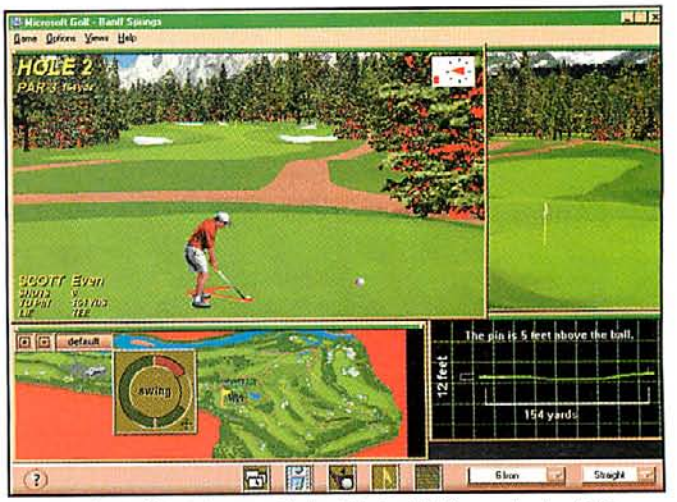
Rating ★ ★ ★ ½

$49.99 Publisher: Electronic Arts

System Requirements: Pentium 75 (P-133 recommended), Windows 95, 16 MB RAM, 60 MB free hard drive space (minimum installation).



Links LS '98 is a faster, better version of this classic golf sim.



Microsoft Golf 3.0 is essentially "Links Lite"—not a bad thing.

REAL 8 POOL™

There's nothing virtual about it.

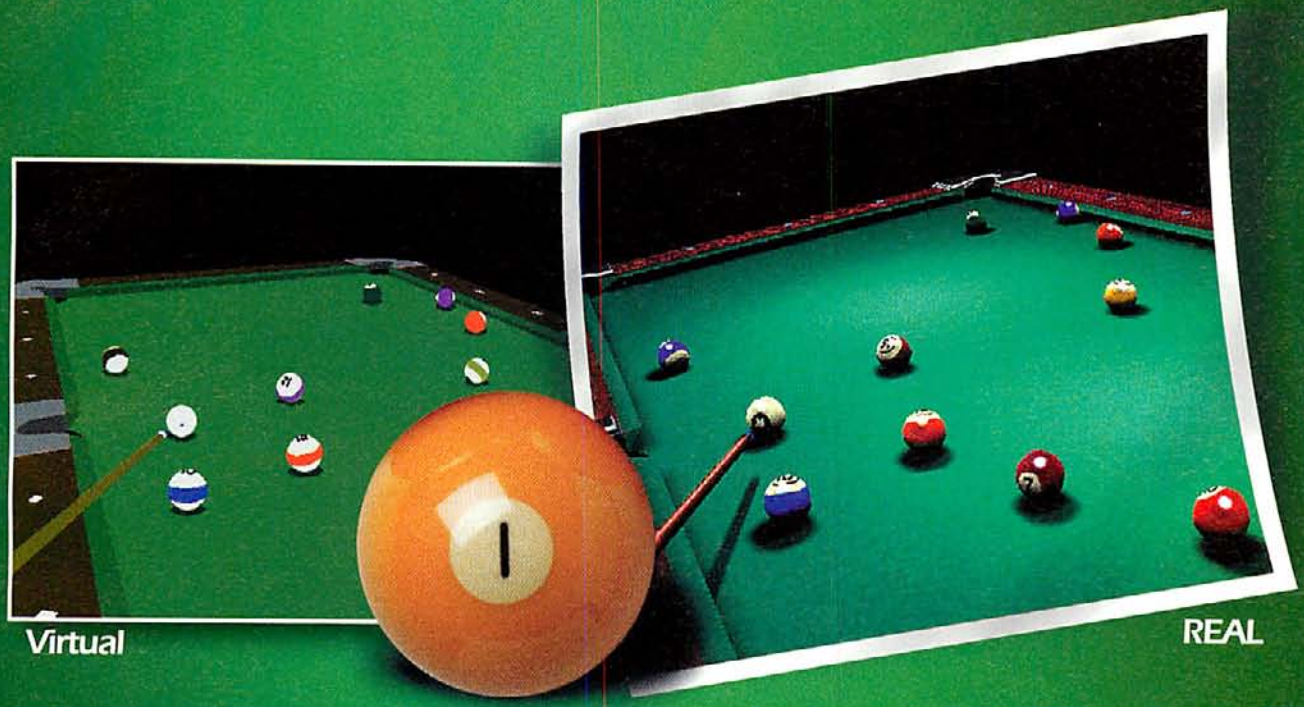


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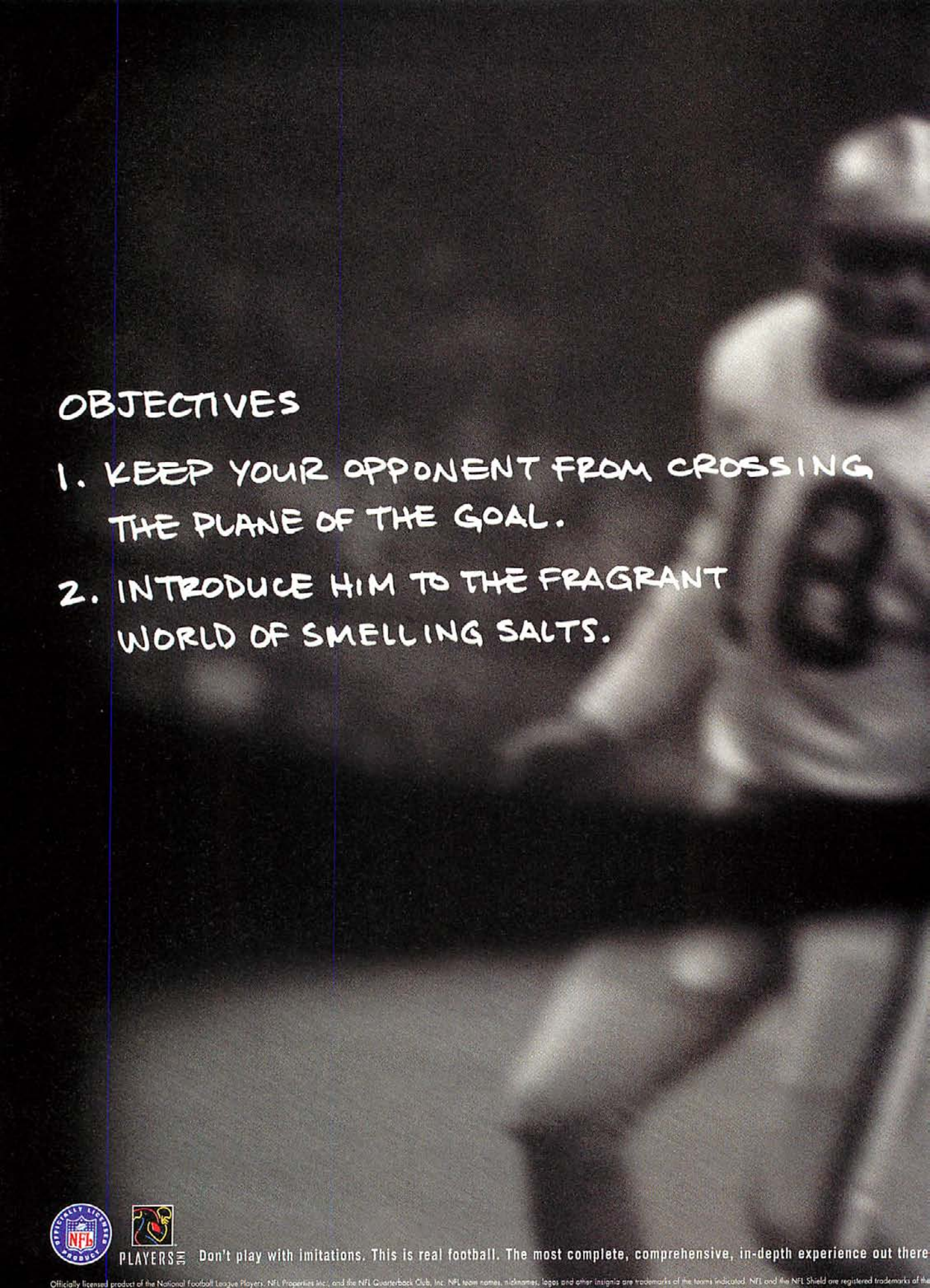
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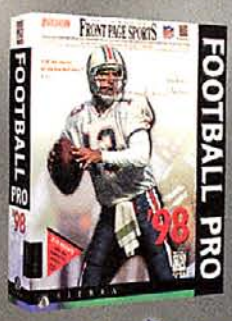
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★★★★★ REVIEW • JACK NICKLAUS 4

CGW CHOICE

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Double Eagle

Accolade Drives to Perfection With the Stunning, Deep JACK NICKLAUS 4

By Scott A. May

Dubbed by many as the "golfer of the century," Jack Nicklaus is truly a legend in his own time. So it's only fitting that the latest computer game to bear his name, Accolade's JACK NICKLAUS 4, should be the preeminent golf simulation of our time. Nearly everything you could ever hope for in a golf game is included in this comprehensive package. It's an absolute model of perfection.

PRO SHOP

Here's what you get in JN4 (take a deep breath): five 18-hole courses (Colleton River Plantation, Country Club of the South, Muirfeld Village, Cabo del Sol, and the fictional Winding Springs), eight play styles, a full-blown course designer, a course converter (for importing JNSE courses), and a choice of four multiplayer modes (serial, modem, LAN, and Internet). The only thing missing is post-game cocktails at the clubhouse.

Pre-game options include course, game length, golfing buddies (with updated stats), a choice of caddies, gimmes, mulligans, and weather conditions (rain, fog, or clear). Three of these options can be further defined: clearing fog, maximum distance for gimmes, and total number of mulligans allowed per round.

The real kicker is the variety of available game styles, the most of any golf sim on the market. These include Best Score Championship, Best Score Handicap, Stroke Play, Match Play, Sudden Death, $1 Million Skins Challenge, Bingo Bango Bongo, and Certified Game (recorded Stroke Play for deferred mail or email matchups).

Graphically, JN4 meets or exceeds anything on the market, including Access Software's LINKS LS. Accolade uses a proprietary height-mapping engine to achieve incredible terrain real-

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Roll Your Own



PACKIN' THE TOOLS Everything you need to design new links—or modify existing ones—is at your disposal in JN4's unsurpassed course architect.

In real life, Jack Nicklaus is in semi-retirement, playing only select senior tournaments. Far from inactive, however, St. Nick devotes much of his energy to course designs. To this end, I can't think of a better testament to his architectural prowess than JACK NICLAUS 4's superb course designer. Modeled after Nicklaus Productions' own CAD system, the course architect is amazingly robust.

It can also be daunting, particularly for first-time designers eager to duplicate their favorite links. For this reason, Accolade devotes about two-thirds of the game manual to course design, including tips, tricks, and a step-by-step tutorial. There's also a built-in design wizard, which automates many of the tedious tasks for beginners.

Starting with a flat piece of land, you build your course from the inside out, applying fairway shapes and greens, setting pars and handicaps, and arranging your overall layout with an eye for natural continuity. Next, fine-tune each hole with variations in shape, elevation and terrain type. From there, a plethora of tool palettes are available to customize your basic design: trees, bushes, rocks, bunkers, lakes, streams, cart paths, objects, sky, and horizon. Using CAD-style boundary points, everything on the screen can be moved or resized using simple drag-and-drop mouse commands.

Auto-rendering lets you see in precise detail how your designs will appear during play. Not only that, but every change is instantly updated in the rendering window. Every square foot of your course can be viewed from virtually any distance or angle.

A few faults are readily apparent: There's no option for importing user-created objects or sounds, and no way to automatically tile view windows on the screen. Finally, there's no provision for testing your design as you go, except to save, exit, and load the unfinished course into the game. These detractions aside, however, the course designer is a powerful, versatile tool guaranteed to give this product long legs in the marketplace.

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ism. For the real-world courses, aerial flybys enabled the designers to accurately detect land elevations within six inches of sea level at 1 x 1 foot intervals. The underlying engine then calculates variables such as light source shading, shadows, and reflections, resulting in the most organic-looking terrain I've ever seen. In fact, look closely and you'll see that the terrain even shades itself—proof positive of the game's subtle but utterly mind-blowing attention to detail.

Because golf is such a fast-paced sport—OK, I'm being sarcastic—JN4's screen redraws are markedly quick. Technically, it's incredible, considering that nearly two-thirds of what you see is 3D-rendered terrain, unlike LINKS LS, which relies much more on a 2D painting horizon to fill the screen. Of course, overall speed is still reliant on hardware factors, such as processor speed, system and video RAM, graphic detail, and screen resolution. JN4 rewards gamers with more than 20MB system RAM, and will run at whatever maximum resolution and color depth your video card supports. Those with less-than-optimal hardware can decrease graphic detail, and run the game in a window using 16- or 8-bit color.

ON THE GREEN

Gameplay offers maximum control with minimum interference. Each stroke consists of three easy steps: Click once for the onscreen aiming arrow; click again to set; and again to start the swing meter in motion. The designers use an overlaid swing meter with visual "sweet spots" for both power (backswing) and accuracy (contact point). Player stance is automatically calculated in the aiming process, which allows you to manually adjust for distance, trajectory, and swing intensity. The swing meter also reflects whether the shot is a drive, chip, or putt.

The game's physics model is incredibly flexible, automatically adjusts to atmospheric conditions for the flight path, and realistically reacts to objects and terrain upon landing. For example, a ball striking the trunk of a tree will react differently than one hitting the branches. For a dramatic demonstration of the game's physics model, try designing a hole using cart path as the primary surface, then watch as a 100-yard drive bounces clear into the next county.

Although JN4 doesn't utilize Direct-Draw for graphics, it employs both DirectPlay for its multiplayer modes, and DirectSound for its rich aural ambiance. The sound is so detailed (about 32MB worth) that the designers are able to assign the correct bird calls to each region.

Other goodies include the ability to best your low score by playing against previously recorded rounds. Adjustable views also let you see the course from any angle, down to one meter above the ball, which is helpful for lining up difficult putts.

HOOK SHOT

Unfettered kudos aside, there's a few dark clouds on JN4's horizon. Talk about system shock: Typical installation requires a whopping 171MB chunk of your hard drive. As if anticipating consumer resistance, Accolade makes absolutely no mention of this fact on the box or in the manual. Also, each 18-hole course you create zaps an additional 10MB or more.

Minor quibbles also include the animated grid overlay used to gauge terrain grades. The grid turns off between shots—an annoying oversight. And "animated"? Slowly draping over the ground isn't a feature worth bragging about.

Still, from play mechanics and graphics rendering to course design and multiplayer capabilities, JACK NICKLAUS 4 is one of the most well-crafted games—of any genre—that I've seen in years.



SWING TIME Unlike other golf sims, JN4's controls are unobtrusive and easy to learn.



ALL NATURAL, NO FILLER JN4's proprietary height-mapping engine yields unparalleled realism.

APPEAL: Computer golfers of all experience levels.

PROS: The best graphics of any golf sim to date; the user interface and course editor are models of perfection; excellent choice of multiplayer modes; free custom courses galore.

CONS: High system requirements; typical installation eats 171MB from your hard drive.

CG RATED

Course Conversions and Web Sites

Talk about getting your money's worth! If you're an avid golfer, JACK NICKLAUS 4 may well be the deal of your dreams. Not only do you get five courses and a built-in designer, but you'll also inherit what amounts to an instant library of thousands of custom-designed links. JN4 has the ability to import and convert courses created with its predecessor, JACK NICKLAUS SIGNATURE EDITION.

All you need is a modem and access to the Internet or other major online services, including America Online, Compuserve, and Delphi. There you'll find enough courses to make your putter flutter indefinitely. The conversion process only transfers terrain shapes and elevations, so you'll have to add objects such as trees and bushes. But that's a minor chore and a heck of a lot easier than starting from scratch.

Below is a list of only a few top Web sites offering hundreds of JNSE courses, available as free downloads. Each site was confirmed as active at the time of this writing:

JNSE Fantasyland
http://users.aol.com/td4729/jnse.htm

The Linksland
http://quancon.com/~brent.blackburn/jnse.htm

The Wild Onion
http://www.onion.com/jnse.htm

Golf Paradise
http://www.geocities.com/TheTropics/1113/

Steve Opfer's JNSE Golf Page
http://www.infi.net/~opfer/golf.htm

Chris Furgerson's JNSE Courses
http://www2.netquest.com/~reolakes/cfjnse.html

Brian Silvernail's Golf Course Designs
http://members.aol.com/bsilvrnail/index.htm



Sim Golf is a flawed but innovative first effort.

Most new versions of established golf sims dare to tinker with success, boasting new graphic engines, improved physics models, and multiplayer capabilities. Electronic Arts, on the other hand, prefers to play it safe with PGA TOUR PRO, a solid but rather conventional Windows 95 update to the company's trusted golf franchise. In a nutshell, this game will neither disappoint nor inspire. For some, that's good enough.

Aside from multiplayer modes and a few new graphic flourishes—including a revamped interface and ambient animation—EA sticks with the boilerplate design that made the previous DOS versions so palatable. Course graphics are suitably photo-realistic, featuring EA's proprietary Flash Draw technology for instant screen updates. New additions to fundamental gameplay include the ability to walk the course in real-time to read the greens. Players also now have a choice between three putting overlays: a square grid, circular targeting web, or putting lines, which illustrate exactly how each green breaks. Other nice features include three user-defined external cameras, viewed in PIP (picture-in-picture) windows, and a "risk meter" to gauge the difficulty of your upcoming shot.

One of the better solitaire golf sims on the market, with a roster of 14 PGA pros to challenge your skills, PGA TOUR PRO is a mixed bag of worthy improvements and superfluous remodeling. EA's previous DOS versions are still champs, but if you crave online multiplayer links, you won't be disappointed.

SimGolf

Rating ★★★½

$49.95 Publisher: Maxis

System Requirements: 486DX2-66 or higher, Windows 95, 12MB RAM, 8MB free hard drive space.

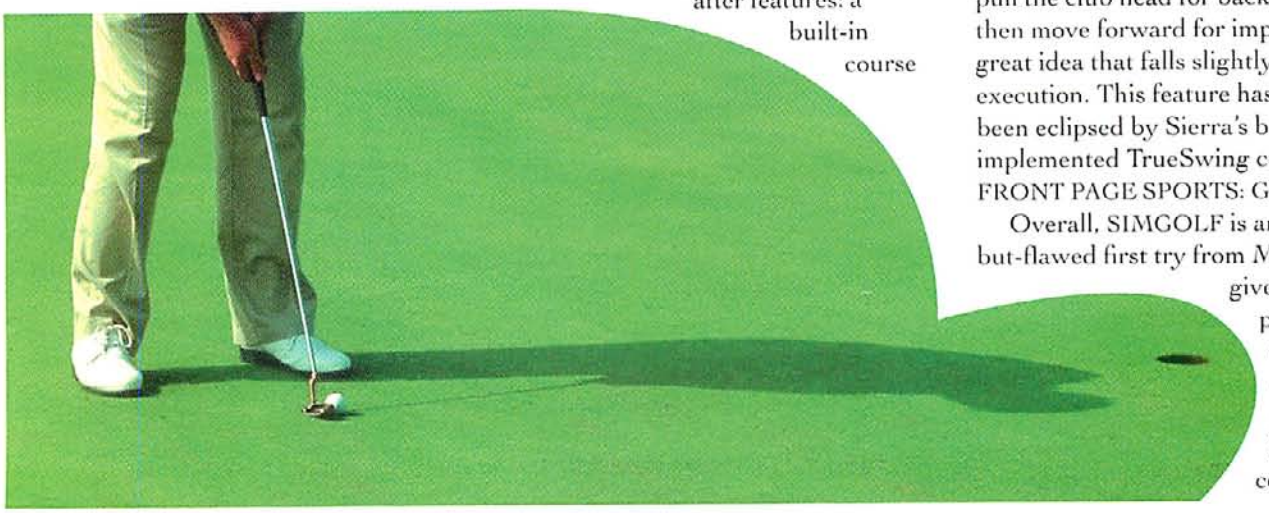
With SIMGOLF, Maxis fires its first volley in the golf wars amid some stiff competition. Although flawed, the game holds up reasonably well, thanks to three sought-after features: a built-in course architect, Internet play, and the first real attempt to revamp the oft-criticized "swing meter." Add a slick user interface and crisp visuals into the mix, and SIMGOLF definitely sports potential.

Course graphics consist of a combination of computer-rendered terrain and digitally captured objects. The result is a very crisp, clean display that's realistic enough, but not overdone. The main play screen features a large third-person view of the course, with options to overlay or tile multiple view windows: top-down, profile, landing, pin, and ball view. An icon bar runs down the left side of the screen, offering easy access to instant replays, a chat window, scorecard, multimedia tips, and online documentation.

The Course Architect is a separate program that interfaces with the game. Essentially a CAD program with cleats, the Course Architect is industrial strength, using an intricate combination of menus, previews, and dialog boxes to pick and place terrain styles, objects, elevations, slopes, green sizes, bunkers, pars, and fairway shapes, among many other variables. SIMGOLF's course architect is powerful, though not as intuitive as Accolade's JN4.

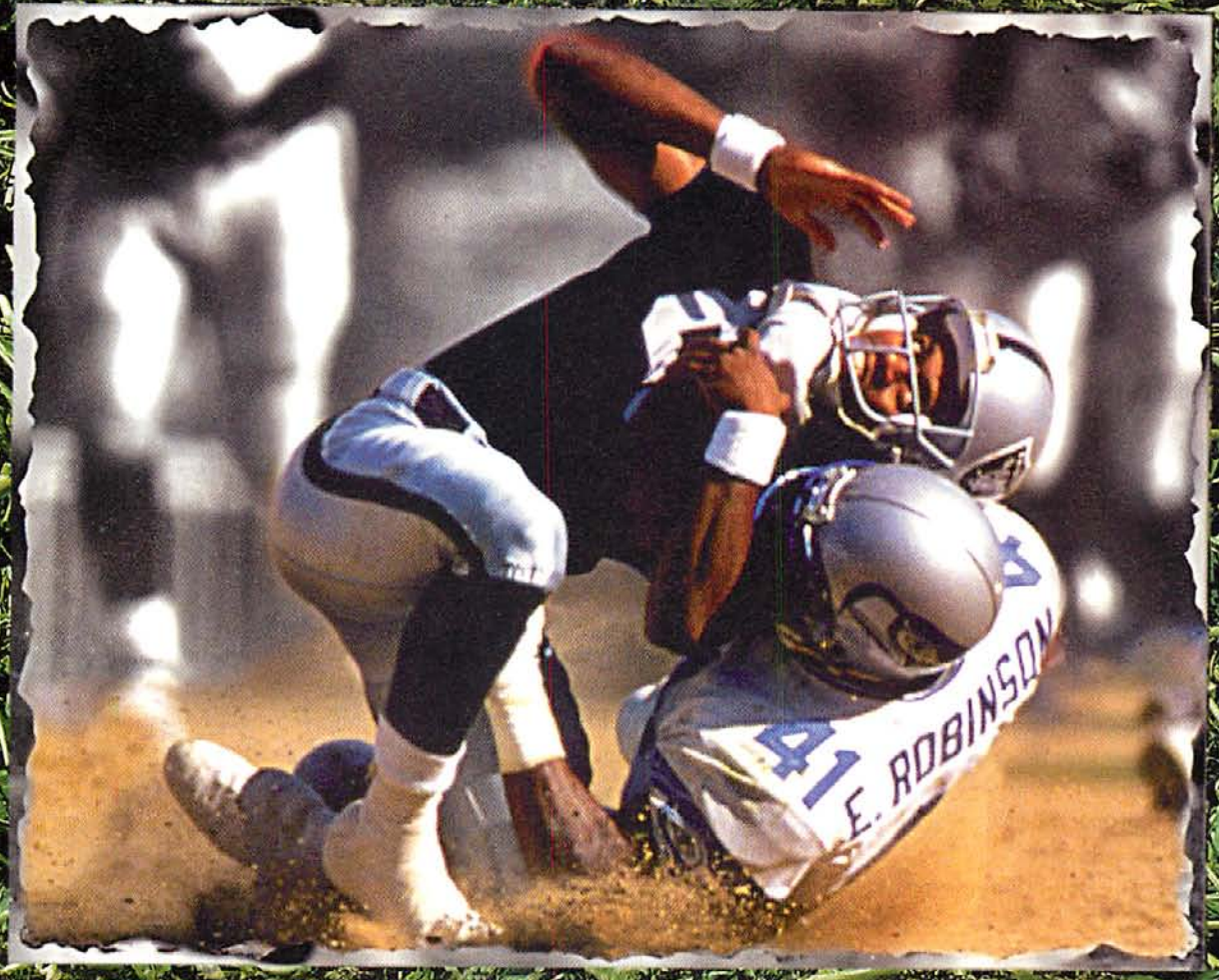
With SIMGOLF, Maxis also introduces the first real attempt to change the physics of simulated club action, dubbed the MouseSwing. Rather than rely on click-and-twitch reaction timing, players now visually pull the club head for backswing, then move forward for impact. It's a great idea that falls slightly short in execution. This feature has since been eclipsed by Sierra's better-implemented TrueSwing controls in FRONT PAGE SPORTS: GOLF.

Overall, SIMGOLF is an earnest-but-flawed first try from Maxis that, given support, may eventually evolve into a first-rate contender.



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Developed for Windows 95

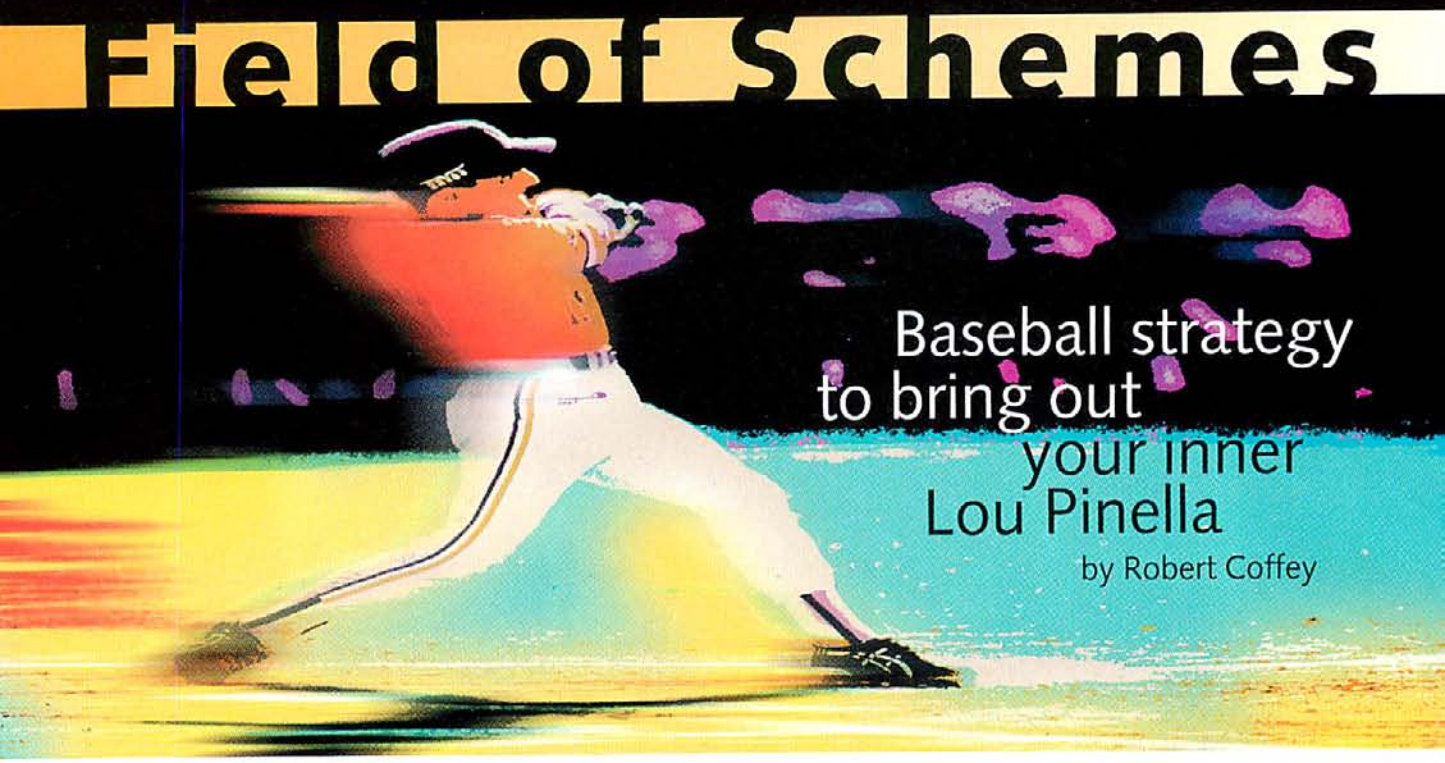
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Field of Schemes



Baseball strategy to bring out your inner Lou Pinella

by Robert Coffey

As sophisticated as baseball sims have become, they still haven't come up with a virtual George Steinbrenner, ready to bounce you the moment you make a managerial decision he disagrees with. Well, at least, not yet. As clownish as the real Steinbrenner's antics may be, they do underscore an important point: Basic managing strategy can play as much a part in deciding the outcome of a game as player performance. Play smart baseball and you can keep Steinbrenner in the owner's box and off your back.

On the mound

When pitching, the most important pitch anyone on your staff can throw is strike one. Getting that 0-1 count gets you ahead of the hitter right away, giving you instant breathing room and letting you dictate the course of the at-bat. Miss with the second pitch and you're still sitting pretty at 1-1, which is much better than a 2-0 count that forces you to make sure you get something over the plate, probably a fastball and probably something the hitter can drive. You don't have to serve up something fat to get that first strike, just choose your pitcher's best pitch, throw it on the edge of the black and get that hitter in the hole.

The importance of keeping the count in your favor cannot be stressed enough, especially in a game like Sierra's FRONT PAGE SPORTS: BASEBALL PRO '98, where computer players won't swing at anything out of the strike zone. Beyond that, staying ahead puts the hitters in a position where they will more often than not get themselves out. Isn't it nice of them to do your job for you? With two strikes on them, hitters have to bat defensively, swinging at close pitches that may or may not be in the strike zone. Staying ahead is particularly effective when playing a multiplayer game. With the count 0-2 or 1-2, you can waste a couple pitches out of the strike zone and get an overanxious player to swing at something bad.

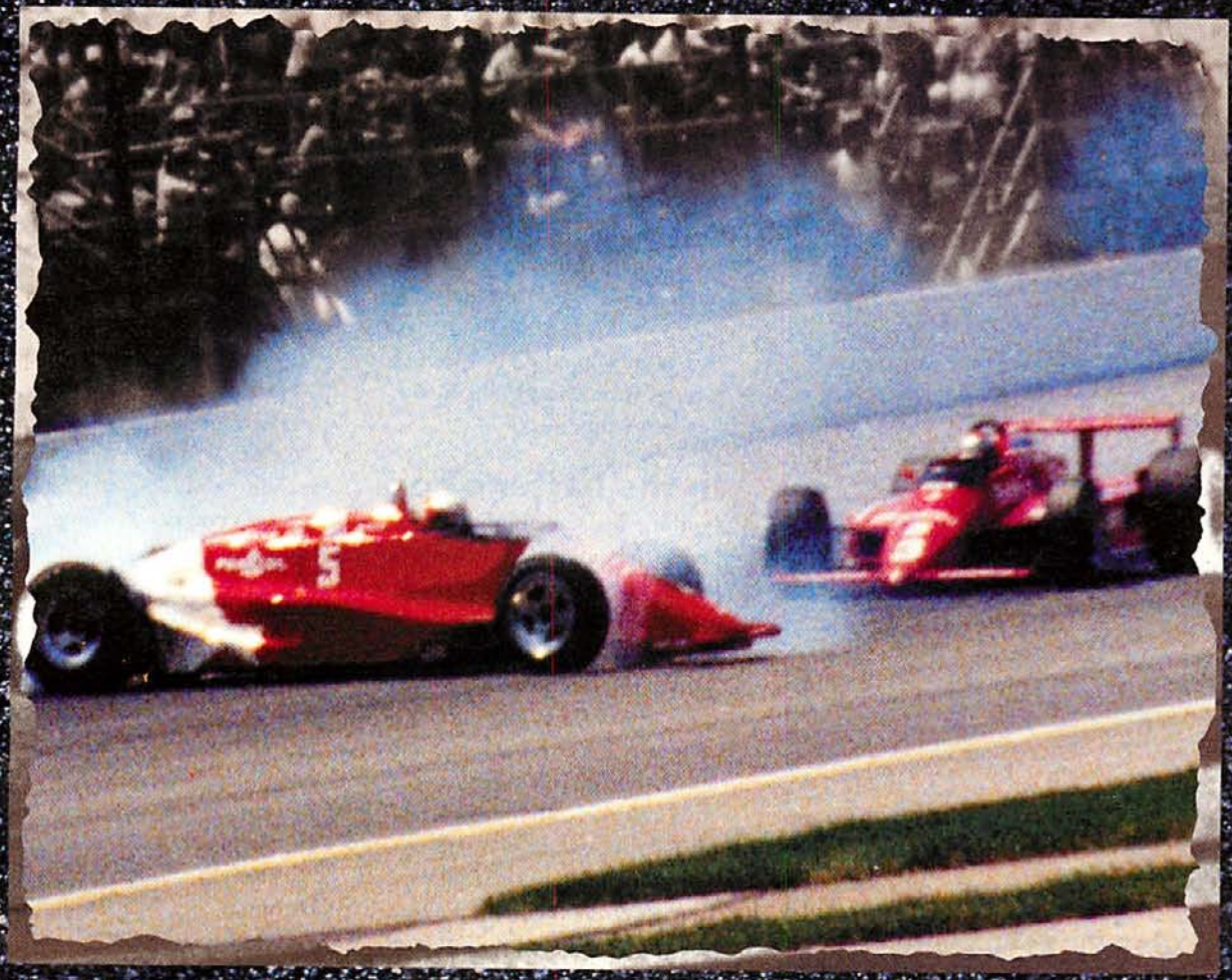
Make sure you change speeds and don't fall in love with heat. Hitting is timing, and effective pitching is the disruption of that timing. Mixing up the speeds of your pitches will throw off even a computer opponent's timing. San Diego's closer, Trevor Hoffman, will throw a couple fastballs in the low 90's to set up a devastating change-up that will have hitters swinging about a week and a half before it reaches the plate. Overreliance on a fastball will kill you later in the game. Good players will eventually catch up to and crush even Randy Johnson's blistering fastball if they see it enough.

Calling the bullpen

While the wealth of stats in MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL 6.0 can help you determine the ideal reliever for a given situation, there are some things that can contribute to your relief efforts that don't show up in any charts. For instance, while fireballing save specialists like Mark Wohlers can be devastating, they aren't always the best answer for a given situation. With runners on base and less than two outs, a hurler with a diving sinker can get you a routine ground ball for an inning-

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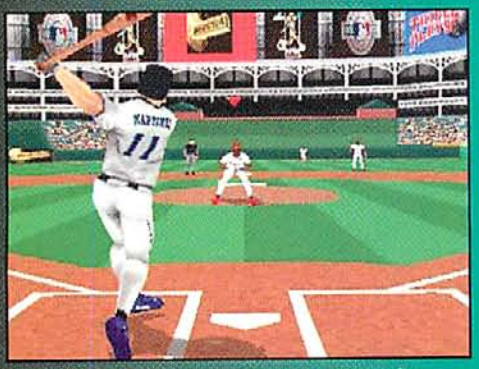
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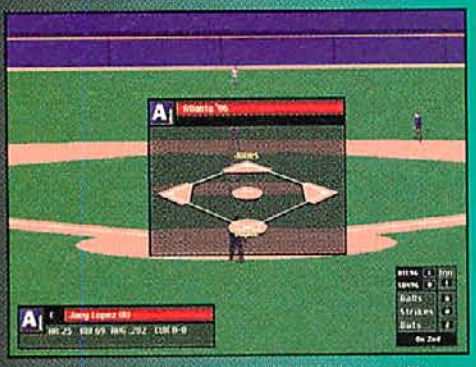
SLINGING IT Sidearm pitchers like Sid Fernandez can be effective relievers by forcing hitters to adjust to a totally new delivery late in the game.



BATMAN FOREVER For hit-and-run plays, check your roster stats for hitters high in average and low in strikeouts. like San Diego's Tony Gwynn.



MOON SHOT Working the count to your favor as a hitter increases the odds of getting a pitch you can send into orbit.



BONEHEAD PLAY Even a good baserunner like Chipper Jones would be foolish to risk stealing third and killing a rally by getting the third out.

killing double play. If you're drafting a team for league play, make sure you've got a couple relievers with wicked breaking stuff and off-speed pitches.

And while you're at it, take a good look at player animations. FPSBB does a good job mixing up delivery styles for various pitchers. Bringing in a sidearmer can totally disorient a human opponent for a few at bats until they can adjust to the change. Even a generally mediocre pitcher like Sid Fernandez can get some much needed outs late in a game when he's snapping off pitches from waaayy inside on left-handed batters.

In the batter's box

Nothing beats slamming a tape-measure home run, but sometimes the best way to get that homer is not to swing the bat. Don't be afraid to take a pitch. Taking pitches helps in more ways than one. It gives you a chance to get used to a particular pitcher's pitch movement. Also, taking a pitch forces hurlers to pitch to you—they can't throw out of the strike zone lest they fall behind and are obliged to serve up fat pitches. Not being afraid to take a few pitches also lets you run up a pitcher's pitch count. In games that pay close attention to pitchers' fatigue—like FPSBB and MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL 6.0—they'll wear out earlier and become more vulnerable.

Obviously, you can't take every first pitch or the other team is guaranteed to throw nothing but certain strikes to get you in the hole early. The only time you really should ignore the first pitch no matter what is if you're trailing late in a game and need baserunners. In that situation you need to try to work out a walk. Your weakest hitters shouldn't swing until they've got two strikes on them, and, actually, that's not such a bad idea for your stronger hitters either.

Running the bases

Stealing bases is a great way to create runs, but don't get carried away. Never make the first or last out of an inning trying to swipe third. Why? A man on second with no outs has a great chance to score anyway, and with two outs you're going to need a base hit to score from third—the same base hit that'll score you from second. Stealing third in those situations needlessly kills scoring opportunities.

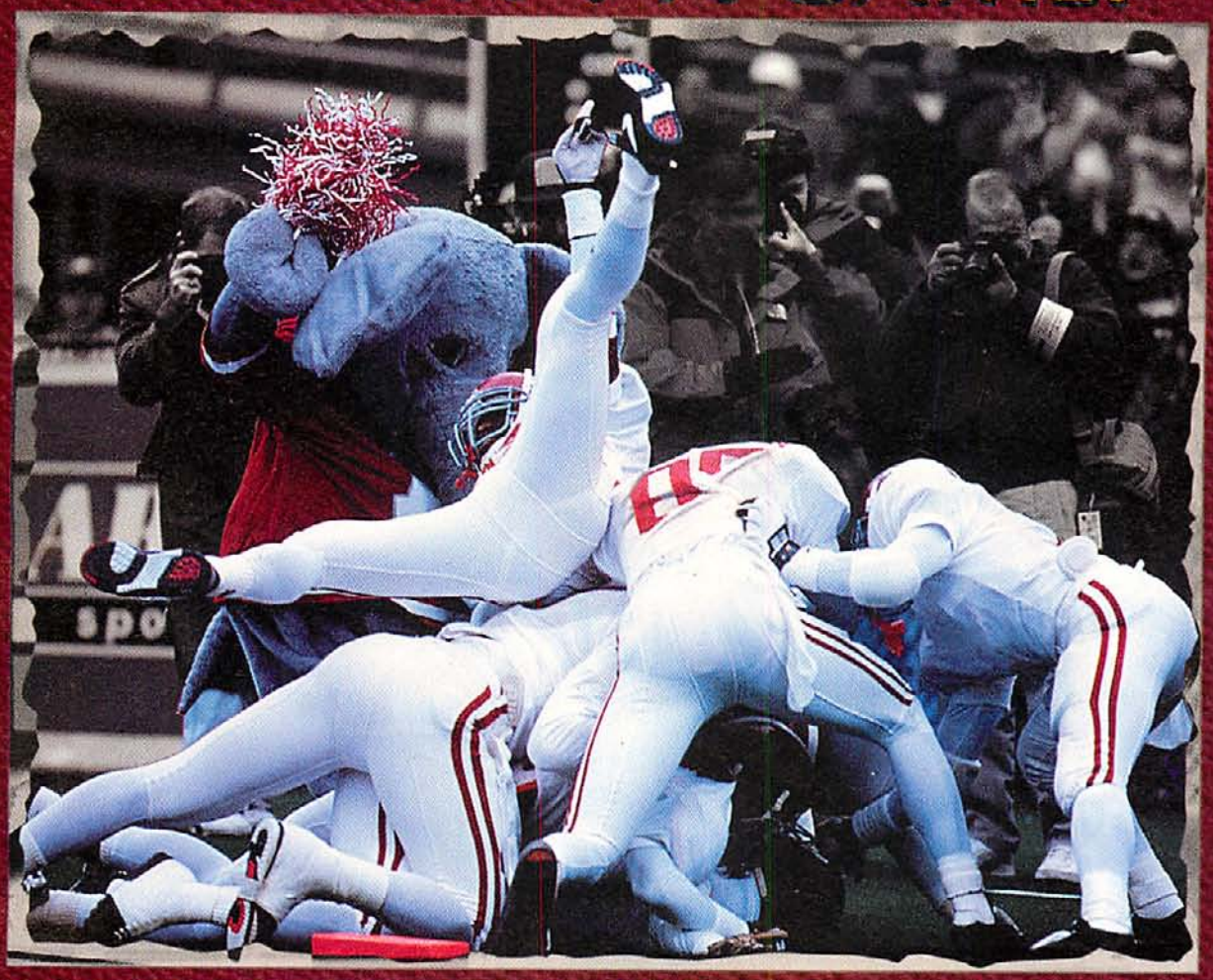
Hit-and-run plays can be a useful tool for creating runs and avoiding double plays, but to succeed you need to have the right players in the right place at the right time. Since the batter has to swing to protect the runner, you should only call the hit-and-run when the count favors your getting a good pitch to hit, like 2-0 or 3-1. Speed on the basepaths helps, but the hitter is the crucial part of the hit-and-run equation. In FPSBB look for a hitter with a high contact rating; in MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL 6.0 you'll want a hitter with a high average and few strikeouts. In the rock 'em, sock 'em action of TRIPLE PLAY 98 it pretty much boils down to "Do you feel lucky, punk? Well, do you?"

A double steal with runners on the corners can be very effective against a human opponent. With less than two outs, tell the runner at first to steal second. As soon as the catcher throws to second take off from third and steal a run. Share in the love as your buddy smashes his joystick in impotent frustration.

Baseball is a game full of unwritten rules. Pay attention to them and you can keep yourself in the game until the final inning. ■

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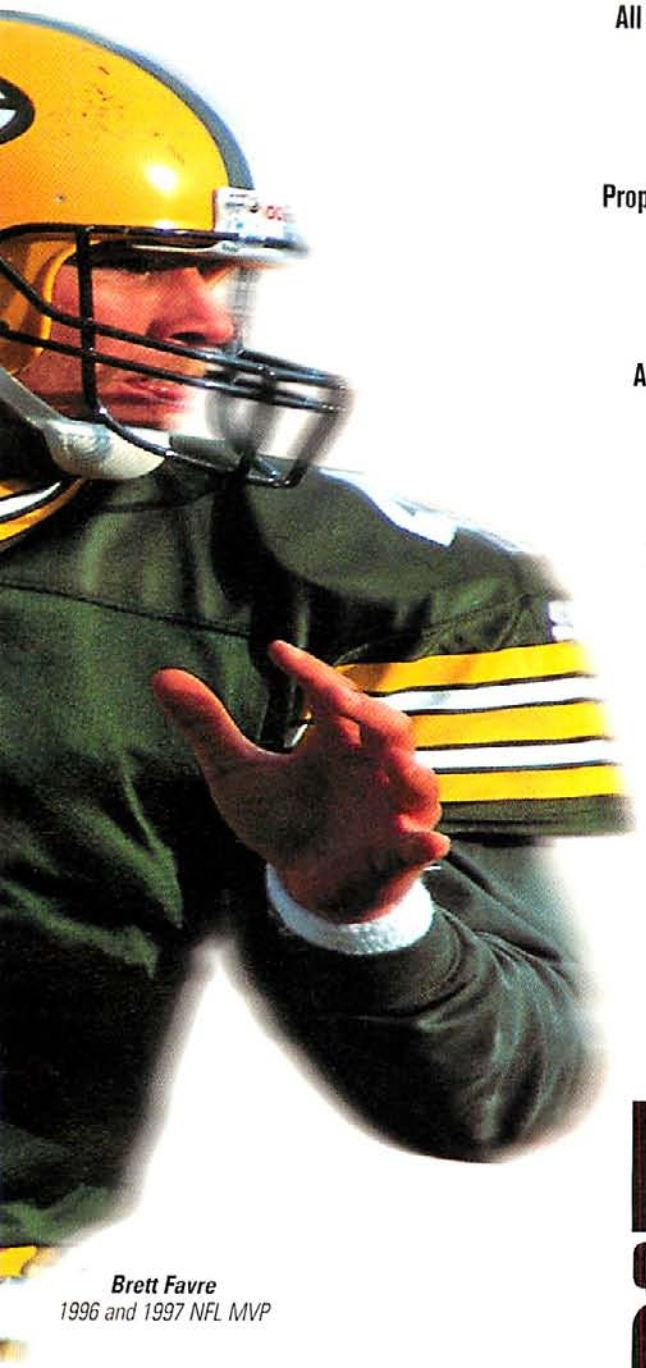
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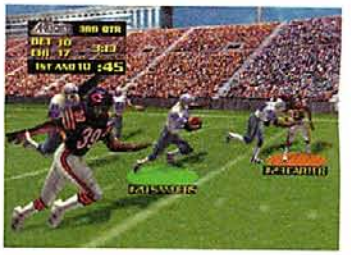
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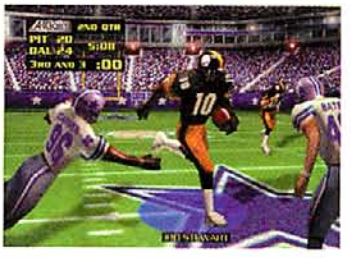
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #255

CGWs SCORECARD

GAME	PUBLISHER	CGW REVIEW	RATING	SUMMARY
Baseball				
FPS: Baseball 98	Sierra	Oct. 97	2.5 stars	Better than last year's catastrophe, but it still has a long way to go.
Grand Slam	Virgin Interactive	Oct. 97	1.5 stars	Looks and feels like a bad console game. Awkward interface, weak stats and trade AI.
Pro League Baseball '97	General Admission Gold	May 97	3 stars	Good sim game with excellent statistical accuracy. Weak arcade play.
Tony La Russa 4	Maxis Sports	Oct. 97	2 stars	Disastrous step backward for one of the great PC baseball sims. Stick with Tony 3.
Triple Play 98	EA Sports	Sept 97	3 stars	Entertaining 3D arcade action, but light on statistical accuracy.
Football				
ABC's Monday Night Football	OT Sports	Dec 96	3 stars	Great playbook and Internet play options, but poor AI and no league management tools.
FPS: Football Pro '97	Sierra	March 97	4.5 stars	Great coaching and arcade play, great graphics. Marred by bugs.
Madden 97	EA Sports	Jan 97	2 stars	The weakest Madden to date. Poor AI and gamepad support, and many multiplayer problems.
Microleague Pro Football 97	MMI	April 97	3.5 stars	Challenging, elegantly designed coaching sim. No arcade play, and graphics are behind the times.
NFL Quarterback Club '97	Acclaim	Jan 97	3.5 stars	Great console-style football action with excellent player controls. Some goofy AI problems though.
Basketball				
Full Court Press	Microsoft	Jan 97	3.5 stars	Decent hoops game with impressive playbook and management options. Suffers from high requirements and sloppy controls.
NBA Live 97	EA Sports	April 97	4.5 stars	The best NBA Live yet, with great graphics, multiplayer support and addictive action-oriented gameplay.
NCAA Basketball Final Four 97	Mindscape	July 97	2 stars	Mediocre college hoops with dated graphics, limited options, and confused layout.
NCAA Championship Basketball	GTE	Feb 97	3 stars	Enjoyable college game with unique recruiting model and multiple-season play. Arcade play is a bit weak.
Hockey				
NHL 97	EA Sports	Dec 96	4.5 stars	Outstanding graphics and exciting action-oriented gameplay. AI is weak, though, and there's no team coaching strategies.
Solid Ice	Empire Interactive	Jan 97	3 stars	Intelligent, realistic hockey sim for serious fans. Seriously marred by awkward graphics and low-tech interface.

GAME	PUBLISHER	CGW REVIEW	RATING	SUMMARY
Golf				
British Open Championship Golf	Looking Glass	Aug 97	3.5 stars	Well-paced, realistic and intelligent golf action, but mechanics are difficult and there's no multiplayer options.
FPS: Golf	Sierra	Sept. 97	4 stars	Superb graphics, intuitive interface, and good multiplayer options. TrueSwing is best alternative yet to traditional swing meter.
Jack Nicklaus 4	Accolade	June 97	5 stars	Top-notch golf sim, with excellent graphics, interface, course editor, multiplayer options
Microsoft Golf 3.0	Microsoft	April 97	4 stars	Essentially, a quicker, cleaner, and simpler version of Links LS for Win 95 users.
PGA Tour Pro	EA Sports	Oct. 97	3.5 stars	Good update of a good series, with multiple courses and great multiplayer options.
SimGolf	Maxis	March 97	3.5 stars	Decent course designer and graphics, but with slow performance and steep learning curve.
Racing				
NASCAR Racing 2	Sierra	March 97	5 stars	Outstanding racing sim, with excellent graphics and car models, and better track depictions than previous version.
Daytona USA	SEGA	March 97	2.5 stars	PC version of popular coin-op game suffers from horrendous controls and lack of multiplayer support.
Soccer				
FIFA Soccer 97	EA Sports	April 97	3 stars	Great graphics and views, cool indoor soccer play, good remote play. High system requirements and weak docs.
Kickoff 97	Maxis Sports	Oct 97	4 stars	First U.S. version of ANCO's soccer sim is the best of the class, with great gameplay and challenging AI.
Microsoft Soccer	Microsoft	April 97	2 stars	A nice-looking game ruined by sluggish performance and terrible AI.
Misc.				
Ten Pin Alley	ASC Games	Aug 97	2.5 stars	Realistic bowling action, but tedious and confusing controls bog it down.
The Art of Fly Fishing, Vol 1.	Gametek	May 97	2.5 stars	Easy to learn fly-fishing sim that suffers from extremely dry presentation.
Trophy Bass 2	Sierra	Feb 97	4 stars	The definitive fishing simulation made better, with improved fish AI and many new features.

CGW'S GUIDE TO PC SPORTS
Editor: Jeff Green
Art Direction/Design: Eddie Lee , Square Two Design, San Francisco, CA
Design/Production: Ruth Liebman, Square Two Design.
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #062

A Woman's Place

From Donkey Kong to Tomb Raider, How Women's Roles Have (and Haven't) Changed



"Sure, she's powerful and assertive," a journalist friend said to me over coffee. "She takes care of herself, and she knows how to handle a gun. She's a great role model for girls." Sip. "But how many copies of Tomb Raider do you think they'd have sold if they'd made Lara Croft flat-chested?"

The talk is the same all over the industry. Tomb Raider is a meteoric hit because the game is so enjoyable, regardless of who its characters are or what they look like. But Lara Croft, the game's virtual star, is a meteoric hit in her own right. In recent months, her pneumatic, polygonal torso and sly smirk have graced the covers of numerous magazines, including some style 'zines that have nothing to do with computer games.

Some embrace her as the first self-reliant female action hero to carry a major game on her own; others see her as nothing more than the embodiment of adolescent male fantasies.

WOMEN'S WORK

With the exception of certain nominally female characters of the videogame era, such as Ms. Pac-Man, women have only recently taken on major roles in computer games. In the early days, female characters existed solely as prizes, damsels in distress whose role it was to be saved. Typically, their actions were limited to crying for help and then rewarding the male hero with a kiss when he came through. Mario's girlfriend in Donkey Kong, Olive Oyl in Popeye, Smurfette in Smurf Adventure, the buxom princess in Defender of the Crown—the examples are easy to come by.

Eventually, adventure games and RPGs started experimenting: They offered players the choice of playing male or female characters, or of including both in a party. But the choice of gender rarely made an impact on the game. Infocom was one of the early experimenters. You could make gender selections in Moonmist and Leather Goddesses of Phobos, for example, but you had to look hard to see how the game changed as a result. It wasn't until Plundered Hearts that Infocom created a character who was explicitly and necessarily female, a young woman whose goal was to save her ailing father and satisfy her longing for a handsome pirate. Notably, the game got a cool reception from the buying public.

Sierra's Roberta Williams has made a point of putting female characters in the foreground of some of her games, starring two in the most recent King's Quest installment and one in the Laura Bow mystery series. However, the Laura Bow series was aborted after the first two titles failed to catch gamers' fancy, and most King's Quest protagonists over the years have been male. Then, along comes Tomb Raider, and suddenly female leads are hot.

THE NEXT GENERATION

"Hot" isn't a bad thing to be, nor is "sexy." Xena may be an imperfect role model for young girls, but if so, it's not because she shows off her cleavage. Lara Croft may be a caricature—the computer-game equivalent of Jessica Rabbit—but there is a place in the world for sexy caricatures. If teenage boys get an extra thrill out of the game because of it, I say bully for them. Put her on the cover of more magazines; star her in more games!

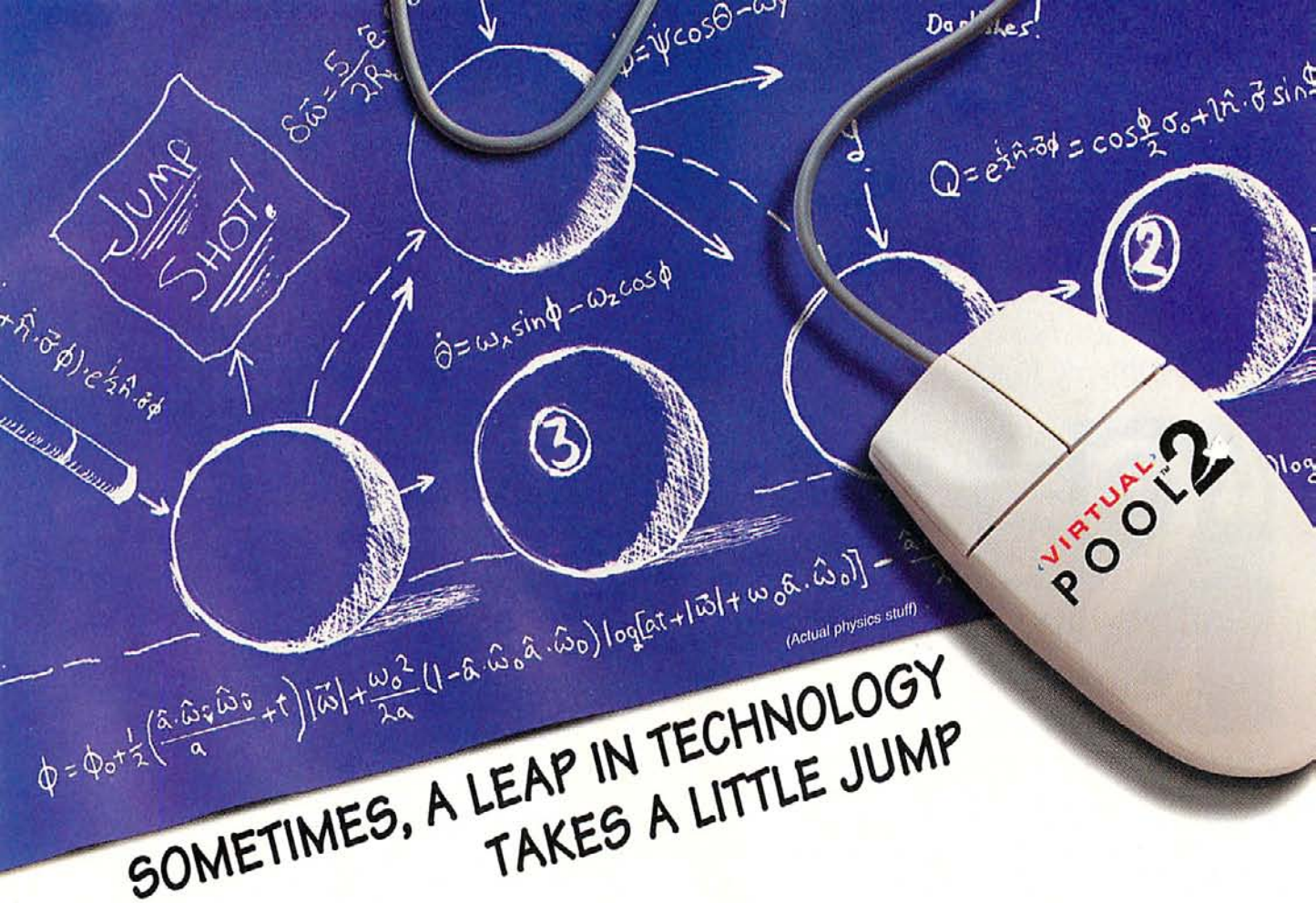
What I worry about is that Lara currently stands almost alone on a list of prominent female computer-game characters, and the heroines we're bound to see in the wake of her success are likely to look just like her. On TV, you may have Xena, but you also have a wide range of alternate female roles, from Mrs. Cleaver and Jessica Fletcher to Lieutenant Uhura and Agent Scully. Sexpots and scientists, ingenues and investigators, Charlie's Angels and Cagney and Lacey—viewers can take their pick. In computer games, you have Lara Croft and that's about it.

> **"How many copies of Tomb Raider do you think they'd have sold if they'd made Lara Croft flat-chested?"**

Today, more than 95 percent of the readers of this magazine are men, but that won't always be the case. Not if computer gaming continues to broaden its appeal, not if we in the industry do our jobs right. Hasn't the time come for a more diverse representation of women in computer games?

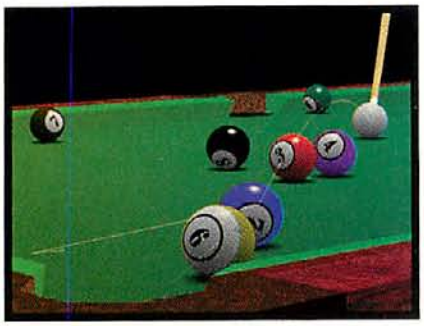


MOVE OVER, XENA Lara Croft carries on the tradition of superheroines doubling as pinups. Should we be worried that the poster child for self-reliant women in computer games sells primarily on the basis of her bra size?

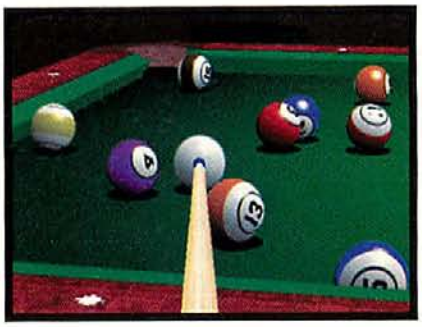


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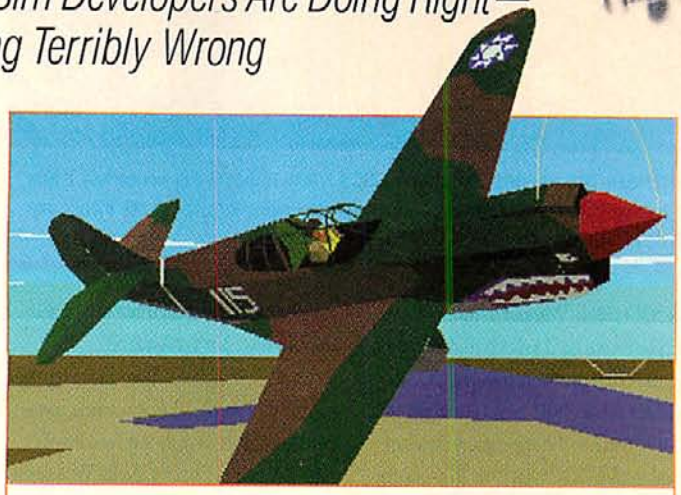
CIRCLE READER SERVICE #077

Building the Perfect Sim



A Look at What Flight Sim Developers Are Doing Right—and What They're Doing Terribly Wrong

Nobody has ever created a perfect simulation (quiet in the back, you FALCON 3.0, SU-27 FLANKER, and SWOTL fans!). Those sims that have been successful, the ones that stood out from the crowd and gained critical and financial success, have generally done a good job of implementing a core set of features that make the game accessible for newbies, while giving it an authentic feel for experienced fliers. But miss one or two of these core features and you doom your sim to being a niche product.



FORGOTTEN HEROES Where are the sims based on pilot memoirs? Companies should enlist former Flying Tigers and other World War II pilots to help design sims.

> "There's a core set of features that any good flight simulation must have."

This month we offer a checklist of the must-have features for a quality flight simulation. I've talked to numerous flight-sim fans, expert and newbie alike, and followed years of discussions on comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.flight-sim and CompuServe's FSFORUMs, in order to determine exactly which features are deemed vital by sim pilots.

THE VITAL CHECKLIST

To be successful—to be a standout—any flight sim needs five key characteristics: Smooth, attractive graphics; a convincing environment; a good view system; believable flight modeling; and a range of difficulty options.

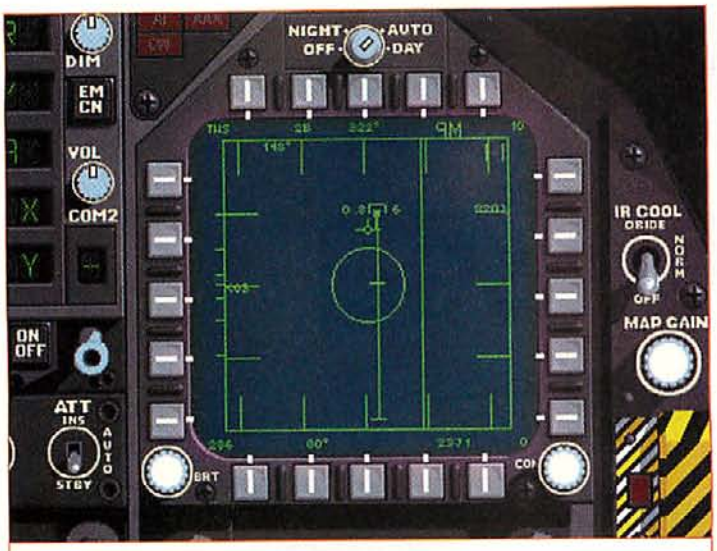
Serious sim pilots might brand me a heretic for listing graphics first, but I'm not just talking eye candy. Smooth graphics updates make all the difference for playability. Witness FLYING CORPS, which was unplayable on most systems in hi-res modes until developer Rowan released the

ON THE RADAR

CONFIRMED KILL, the Eidos multiplayer, World War II air-combat simulation, is still on track for a winter release. Unlike the current crop of online sims, which (except during special events) feature perpetual arenas with ahistorical mixes of aircraft, CONFIRMED KILL will let players create virtual battles in authentic WWII settings. The option will still be there to go Corsair versus Mustang.

In our E3 simulations report, we expressed some concern about the realism in Eidos' upcoming AH-64A simulation, TEAM APACHE, due to the simple, game-ish HUD we saw on the demo version of the game. Producer Bryan Walker—a former Apache pilot himself—assures us that the HUD display we saw was very old, temporary code, and that the final product due out early next year would redefine gamers' expectations for realism in helicopter simulations.





REMEMBER THE NEWBIE The radar in GSC's F/A-18 HORNET 3.0 is wonderfully realistic, but the lack of a simplified mode for beginners makes it harder to talk friends into joining network games.

Direct3D patch. Without a smooth frame rate, planes are hard to keep under control, and combat is nearly impossible.

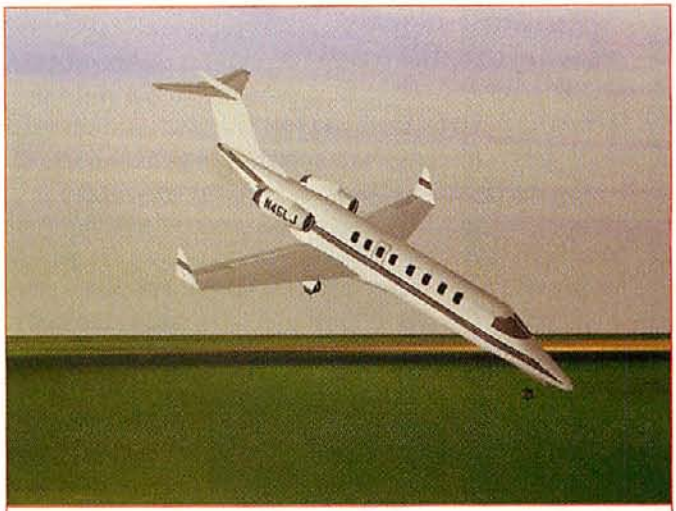
That said, realistic looks are important as well. Witness the widespread sales of Novalogic's F-22 LIGHTNING II—a very basic simulation with a limited number of canned missions, but with fast, detailed graphics—versus the niche popularity of SSI's SU-27 FLANKER, a very sophisticated simulation with a detailed mission editor, but only a simple, polygon-based engine. With 3D card support becoming the norm, there will be no excuse for 1998's sims not playing fast while looking superb. Detailed graphics aren't just necessary from a flash-and-dazzle perspective—they help you suspend disbelief and become immersed in the sim.

Next is the view system. Beginning sim pilots usually stick to looking directly forward through the windscreen. But to excel in sims, as in real-life combat, you need to be able to look all around to target enemy threats. The three primary view systems are panning, virtual cockpits; fixed views, which let you look immediately in any direction; and padlock views, which track enemy aircraft. View systems are a religious issue, and you'll never convince a proponent of one type that another is better. To succeed, a sim should include all three types, as does FLYING NIGHTMARES 2.

Fixed views should afford all the flexibility of the human head. For instance, it was hard to dogfight in early test versions of SABRE ACE and EUROPEAN AIR WAR since there was no way to look 90-degrees straight up. This view is vital to tracking enemy aircraft when you're in a tight, turning fight. Both sims will include this view in their shipping versions. WARBIRDS and AIR WARRIOR II share a common view key set that allows ultimate flexibility; the developers of JANE'S F-15 and FIGHTER SQUADRON: SCREAMIN' DEMONS OVER EUROPE have announced they'll use this key layout as well. It's hoped that all developers follow suit, giving gamers one less set of keys to learn—and to reprogram on their joysticks.

With padlock views, it's important to include cues to indicate which direction your head is looking, so you can bring the plane's nose around to face the enemy. EF2000 does this particularly well with the chevron reflections on its canopy; Microsoft's FIGHTER ACE uses canopy frames to good effect here. Ideally, sims should include two levels of padlock views. The expert padlock should lose track of the enemy when it passes behind an obstruction, while, to make things easier for newbies, the arcade padlock should continue tracking the enemy even when it passes under the plane. Padlocks should track everything you could normally track with your eyes.

Believable aircraft performance is vital. Although accurate performance is best, it's not always 100 percent achievable on today's hardware. At worst, a program shouldn't have flagrant behaviors that jar you out of the impression that you're flying a real aircraft. Not long ago I decided to see how far into the stratosphere I could push a simulated jet. The jet continued climbing until it hit 65,000 feet, at which point it stopped climbing, though it maintained a



WHERE'S THE KABOOM? When we crash, show us the explosions and burning wreckage; don't cop out with still images, as in iF-22 and LONGBOW, or a simple "Crash" line, as in FLIGHT SIMULATOR 98 (pictured).

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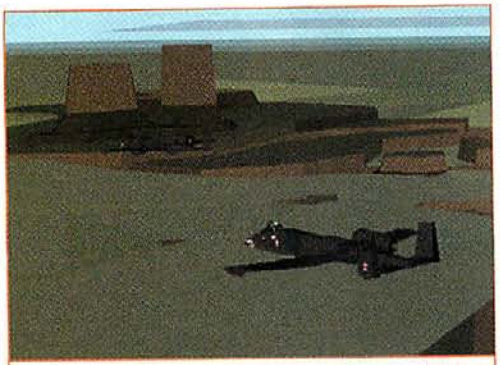
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COMMAND AND CONTROL Realistic wingman control adds much to a sim. Wingmen in A-10 CUBA! (pictured), don't even know you exist, unlike those in, say, IF-22.

nose-up attitude. And so went suspension of disbelief. Climb rates, roll rates, stall behavior, spins, altitude performance variations, and runway handling are all important to serious sim pilots. Developers should further make sure that wingmen and enemy aircraft operate under the same performance constraints. In Interactive Magic's IF22, a wingman who takes off 20 seconds after you do can unrealistically catch up, even though you may have been in full afterburner the entire time.

Last, developers should target the entire range of gamers. Sierra's SILENT THUNDER: A-10 TANK KILLER 2 and MSI's BACK TO BAGHDAD hit the low and high ends of the sim market and were mostly ignored by the masses in the middle. That's not to say that a game shouldn't include beginner- or hard-core–oriented features: The best sims will let pilots select between realism levels. This makes them accessible to gamers of all abilities. Beginners can gradually turn on more options, so the game remains entertaining as they build their skill sets. This design worked marvelously well for RED BARON, a game that spent more than six years on store shelves.

THE IMPORTANT EXTRAS

Beyond the key ingredients, long-term playability is also important. This is best accomplished by a dynamic campaign, in which the computer generates missions depending on the progress of the air and ground wars. But dynamic missions often have a sameness about them, so many designers opt for scripted missions. When that's the case, the designers should include plenty of missions—the 15 in A-10 CUBA! definitely weren't enough; even the 50-odd mission total in Virgin's SABRE ACE is a bit light. Jane's A-64D LONGBOW—with some 300 missions and a random, branching design that prevents that "been there, done that" feeling—is a wonderful example of how to do it right. LONGBOW 2 may have the best solution: a dynamic campaign that, when conditions are right, tosses in an occasional scripted mission with details impossible to include in a generated mission.

Games with scripted missions will have much longer lives on store shelves and gamers' hard drives if they include mission editors that let gamers create their own sorties. Quick-mission generators, such as the ones in US NAVY FIGHTERS and SABRE ACE, are also musts, allowing you to create what-if scenarios and practice your dogfighting skills.

Make use of the widest range of hardware out there, but be certain also that your game is playable without it. There's no excuse not to include program files for CH, Thrustmaster, Suncom, and Saitek sticks. However, I've flown more than one sim that was obviously never play-tested without rudder pedals—games should be playable with only a two-button joystick.

A recent trend—sudden midair stops to load scenery, as in JETFIGHTER III and FLYING CORPS—is unacceptable. When this happens and the plane keeps flying but the screen isn't updating—as in IF-22—the pauses can be deadly. Designers need to develop a workaround for this problem and never again ship a program with these delays.

Certainly, there are other features a top-notch sim will possess. I haven't even broached the subject of good multiplayer play—that's a column in itself. If there are features you want to see in the next sim you purchase, don't wait until it has shipped to post a gripe on the Internet that it's not there. Send a letter or email to the developer now. You may be pleasantly surprised by the company's response.

Sim Wish List

There are plenty of other things many of us would like to see in every sim we buy. Here's a sampling of the more important issues:

- Model individual system damage. Some of the most exciting combat stories come from pilots nursing a plane home with a damaged wing or trying to make it back to friendly territory with a smoking engine. Let us try our hand.
- Give us the option of ditching pre–Vietnam-era aircraft instead of bailing out. Many pilots chose to ride the plane down rather than risk hitting the silk.
- Don't require superhuman performance from pilots. In US NAVY FIGHTERS '97, you sometimes have single missions in which you're required to shoot down as many MiGs as the best real pilots did over the course of the entire war.
- Hold off on more F-22 sims until the real plane goes into service, please. There are too many interesting current and recent-history aircraft that haven't been modeled yet. Where are the F-4 Phantom, F-8 Crusader, and F-105 Thud sims?
- Create believable storylines. We wouldn't buy lone-wolf mercenary A-10 or F-16 pilots in a bad Hollywood movie, so why should we swallow the premise in sims?
- Let us name our wingmen. It's much closer to home to lose your college roommate or best friend in combat than the designer's third cousin.

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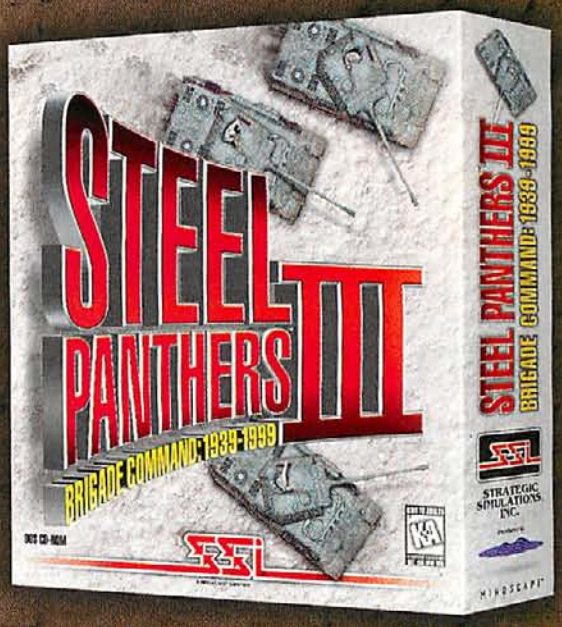
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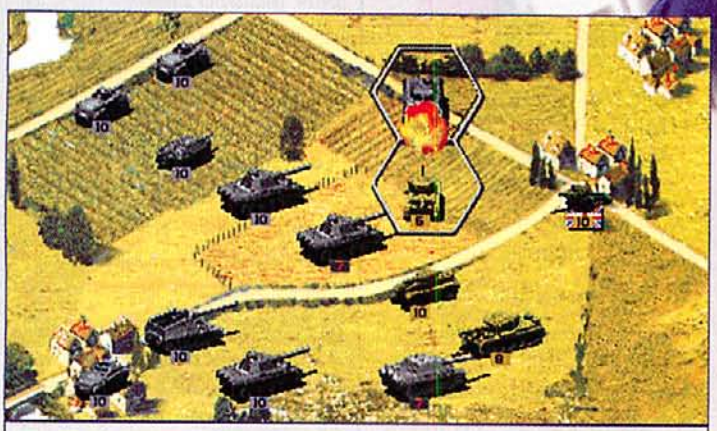
GenCon XXX

The Premier Gaming Con Adapts for the New Millennium



The naysayers were in rare form as they oozed from the woodwork and slid along the poured concrete floors of the Milwaukee Convention Center, which was once again home to the GenCon convention. The same people who just a year ago said that nothing in gaming history could match the phenomenon of *Magic: The Gathering* now were convinced that gaming was in a tailspin. Their evidence was simple: Attendance at GenCon was down; *Magic* had glutted the market for card (and other) games; and there was no single game ready to assume *Magic*'s throne. So bad was the situation, they crowed, that Wizards of the Coast (the *Magic* folks) would either move the con to its Seattle headquarters or cancel the event entirely.

Most of these rumors, I found out, were wishful thinking (or worse) spread by competitors of Wizards of the Coast. After all, Wizards didn't buy TSR just for *D&D*. GenCon, now in its 30th year, is a very profitable enterprise, one that dwarfs most other gaming shows in attendance. Attendance *was* slightly lower this year—some 28,500 by the best estimate I could pin down—but that still places GenCon just behind E3. Keep in mind that more than 95 percent of the GenCon attendees are paying customers, and you begin to get the picture. All but two of the vendors I polled said that sales were up over last year.



PANZER GENERAL II This tournament from SSI outdrew many of the boardgame and paper RPG events at GenCon.

One official from Wizards of the Coast (who requested anonymity) said not only that the organization was under contract to stay in Milwaukee for next year, but that it was already negotiating to renew the contract for several more years: "The Milwaukee site is relatively inexpensive and very accessible to thousands of gamers—and the con has been here for decades." To be fair, there is some truth to the rumor that TSR is being dismantled: Evidently only four to five senior people are being kept, and the staff is being moved to Wizards' digs in Seattle.

As for the lack of aspirants to *Magic*'s dominance, a *Magic*, *D&D*, or DOOM comes once a decade, if that—and if you saw the crowds at the Wizards booth, you wouldn't worry about *Magic*'s future. In fact, far from being diminished, the influence of the *Magic* collectible card game was everywhere. The *Marvel Superheroes* RPG is currently being redesigned for the SAGA card-based system. Many boardgames contested in GenCon tournaments, such as Avalon Hill's *Hannibal* and *We the People*, already use cards to resolve combat and random events, with more in the series on the way. And there was even a *Star Trek: The Next Generation* collectible dice game, which sold for less than $15 and was garnering healthy crowds.

> "If you're looking for fresh and clever game designs, check out some collectible card games."

BRIEFINGS

MAGIC MULTIPLAYER?

In other trading-card gaming news, MicroProse insists that Manalink, the long-awaited multiplayer code for MAGIC: THE GATHERING PC, will be up and running before Christmas. Moreover, it's supposed to be a free download—draw your own conclusions.



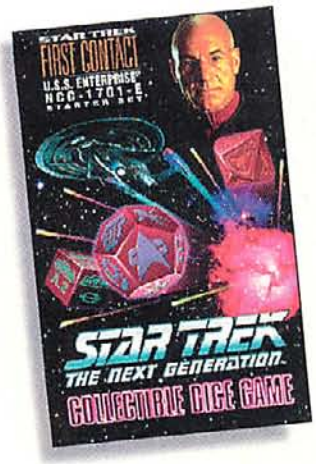
Whether or not Manalink comes off on time, the first expansion pack for MAGIC will be available soon (maybe even as you read this). The add-on promises better AI (more consistent, we hope) and a host of new virtual cards.

JAGGED ALLIANCE ON STEROIDS

It seems only yesterday that I was grousing about the lack of X-COM style games, and then Sir-

Continued on page 390 ▸▸▸▸

TERRY COLEMAN



INVASION OF THE SILICON HORDES

Part of the gloom and doom among the paper gaming types may have stemmed from the increased presence of computer games at GenCon. Westwood and Activision in particular drew a lot of traffic, but SSI stole the show with their PANZER GENERAL II tournament (see READ.ME).

But these events, while reasonably well-attended, couldn't begin to match the sheer variety of the remainder of the show. There were more than 100 *D&D/AD&D* events alone, not counting the two dozen other RPGs represented at the show. There were 14 more strategy boardgaming and miniatures tournaments than two years ago—most impressive, given that Historicon and Avalooncon had occurred in the two weeks just prior to GenCon. All in all, it was a vibrant show, one of the best GenCons in years.

Pick A Card, Any Card

With all due respect to *AD&D* and PANZER GENERAL II, the legacy of GenCon XXX is simply this: If you're looking for fresh and clever game designs, check out some collectible card games. They were everywhere—the heart and soul of the show. And while they aren't technology-driven, good card games do share some similarities with computer games. They tend to be fast-paced, playable in under two hours, and require that you pack a lot of form and function into the interface.

Here, then, is a look at what I consider the best collectible card games from GenCon. As the computer version of MAGIC: THE GATHERING is selling quite well, don't be surprised to see at least a few of these on your desktop in the next couple of years.

1. The X-Files Collectible Card Game



As it should be, this is a very strange game. For example, you don't just discard, you get "debriefed." And while there is combat *á la Magic*, that isn't the point of the game. Basically, you build teams of FBI agents to investigate strange phenomena, attempting to uncover your opponent's X-file, and vice-versa. So, you get to play both Mulder and Scully *as well as* the bureaucratic forces of deceit. What makes this work is that the game employs every character, plot twist, and conspiracy theory we've grown to love from four years of *X-Files* in a system that encourages cross and double cross. There are cards for "Trap," "Alien DNA Steroid Program," "Pheromone-Induced Psychosis," and everyone's favorite villain, "Cigarette Smoking Man," with all adversaries categorized according to affiliation, motive, method, and result. It's as close as a card game is likely to get to an adventure game—and it's endlessly replayable.

USPC Games, Cincinnati, OH, **thex-filesccg.com**

2. The Battle of Beiden Pass

This card game, part of the *Legend of the Five Rings* series, is sort of a cross between those old Koei

BRIEFINGS

▸▸▸▸Continued from page 389

Tech turns around and formally announces JAGGED ALLIANCE II. Not only can your operatives go prone, sneak around, and even climb buildings(!), the designers finally added SVGA graphics. This new breed of mercenary mayhem should begin next spring.

ISI/HPS INTELLIGENCE

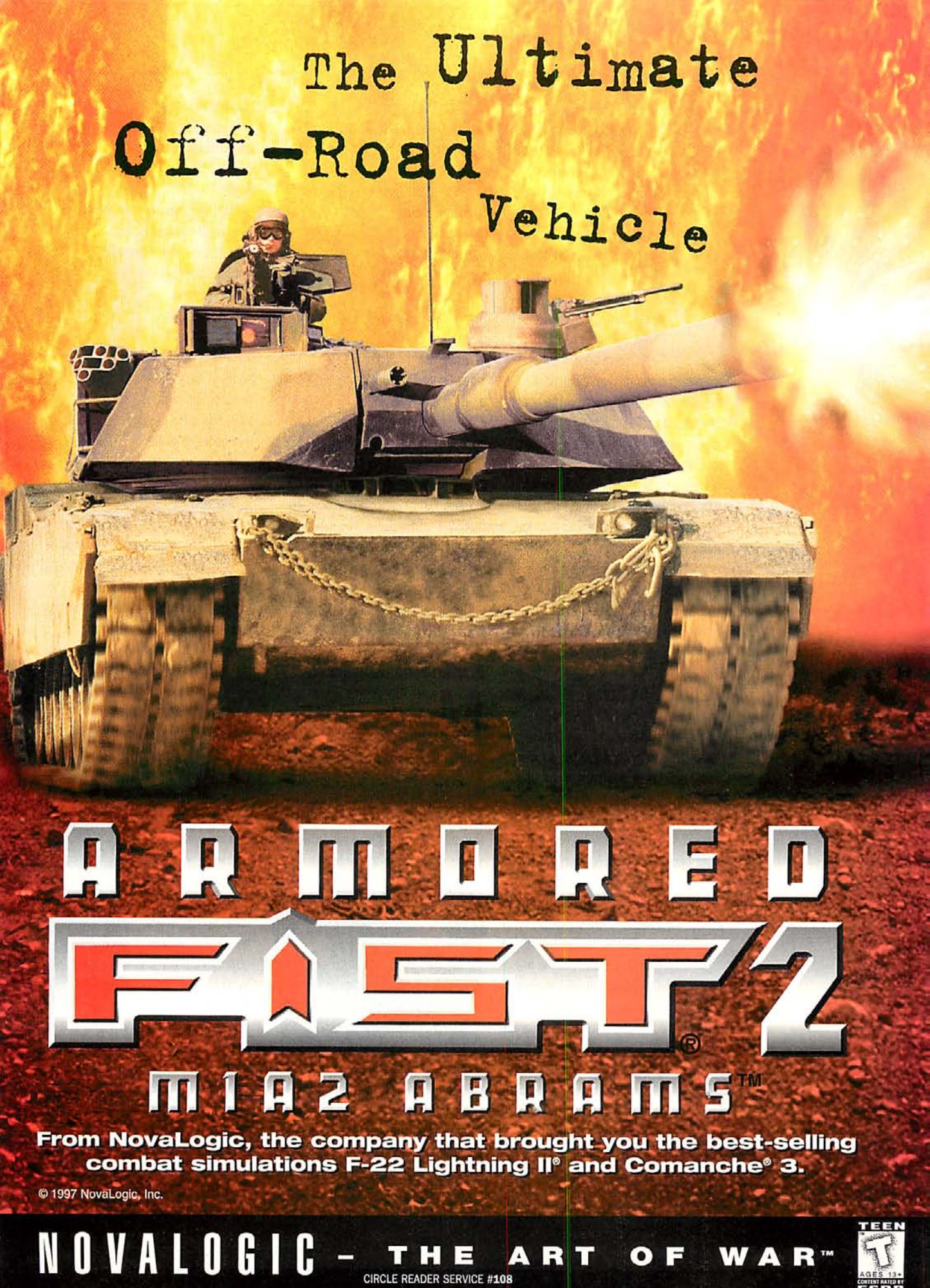
Incredible Simulations' Jeff Lapkoff has finished his work on HPS' upcoming AIDE DE CAMP—which, according to Scott Hamilton, might finally ship this year. The big delay stemmed from Scott's decision to recode the application entirely for Windows 95. Lapkoff promises new Win 95 versions of DEFEND THE ALAMO! and CUSTER'S LAST COMMAND as well, probably next year.



AVALON HILL RUMORS

In the words of designer Charlie Moylan, "Computer ASL will be done when it's done." Meanwhile, work proceeds apace on the next in the OVER THE REICH series, PACIFIC AIR, now retitled WHISTLING DEATH. Seems that the only thing lacking is the final research numbers from codesigner J. D. Webster for the new aircraft.

AH will be doing mail orders starting in November for TAC OPS, evidently with no changes to the game other than packaging. Other negotiations currently involve a sequel to CAVE WARS, a new version of PANZERBLITZ designed specifically for the PC, and a multiplayer Internet version of the diplomatic free-for-all REPUBLIC OF ROME. For now, however, the only classic AH strategy game under contract seems to be FREEDOM IN THE GALAXY.


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strategy games and a collection of Kurosawa films. It contains two card decks (one for the Crab clan, the other for the Dragon clan), plus a basic training manual and advanced rules set. In addition to the usual terrain and spell cards found in most card games, there are ranged attacks, and the game differentiates between cavalry and infantry. The honor of each clan and individual is paramount, and there are plenty of personalities, legendary creatures, and diabolical devices (my favorite is the Monstrous War Machine of Fu Leng) to keep your old copy of *Shogun* collecting dust for many moons. *Legend of the Five Rings* is also a paper RPG; the company is so successful that it was recently purchased by Wizards of the Coast.

Five Rings Publishing Group, Bellevue, WA, **www.frpg.com**

3. Titan: The Arena

Loosely based on the popular Titan boardgame, this fantasy card game has you bet on which fantastical creature will come out on top in the battle arena. The results depend solely on the strength cards played on each creature by you and your opponents, with a twist: Whoever has the most bets showing on a creature controls that creature's special power. As a result, there's a lot of diplomacy and back-stabbing in each of the five rounds of play, augmented by special referee cards. This clever game is not a collectible card game, but it was such a hit at both Avaloncon and GenCon that you're sure to see expansion packs.





Avalon Hill, Baltimore MD, **www.avalonhill.com**

4. Star Wars Collectible Card Game

Although older than some of the other collectible card games, this continues to be popular, for obvious reasons. My experience with the *Star Wars* game is that it's more often collected than played, but that isn't necessarily a bad thing. The best place to start if you're interested is with the First Anthology Set, which includes two unlimited starter decks, two expansion sets and rules for *A New Hope*, a *Jedi* pack, and assorted preview cards, such as the ever-popular Boba Fett.



Decipher, Inc., Norfolk, VA, **www.decipher.com**

5. OverPower: Monumental Set

Marvel Superheroes come to life and go on missions taken from classic comic episodes. Combat is frequent, as you'd expect in a superhero game, with liberal use of special abilities, training cards, and events to spice things up. There are a few neat heroes included with most starter decks, such as the Moon Knight, but most of the well-known figures—Iron Man, Captain America, The Hulk—are rare cards. While this makes some sense from a collector's standpoint, it tends to put a damper on gameplay until you've garnered a few decks. It will be interesting to see how this system holds up in the wake of Marvel's bankruptcy filing.



Fleer/Skybox International, **www.fleerskybox.com**

6. Dune

If you've played DUNE II and still crave more of the vast deserts of Arrakis, you can have the Harkonnen and Atreides factions flipping cards 'til the Worm comes home to roost. Still in development at press time, this game nevertheless had a lot of the books' flavor: smugglers, assassins, the CHOAM league, and the various inhabitants of Arrakis, among other nice touches. Mining spice is simple enough, but the interactive nature of card play makes for lots of battles and intrigue—and football field-sized worms pop up when you least expect it.



Five Rings Publishing Group, Bellevue, WA, **www.frpg.com**

7. Lord of the Rings

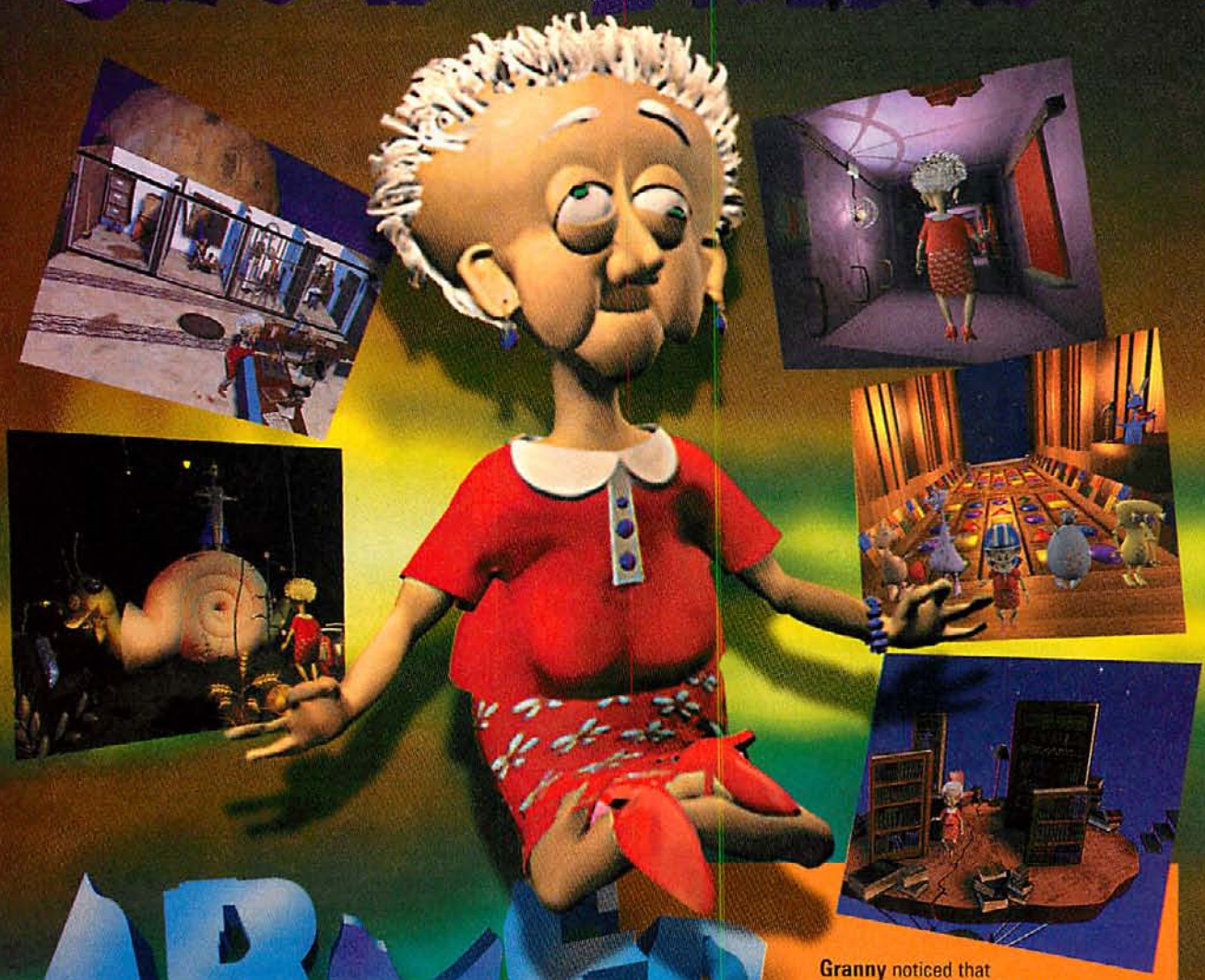
This game marries the mystic tradition of Tolkien to the traditional Tarot deck. Sauron and his minions become the cards of darkness, while Gollum is neutral, and the Hobbits and other free people make up the majority of the deck. The object of the game is to avoid being influenced by the dark side (Sauron and the ring) long enough to play all your cards or score more points than your opponent. If you tire of the game, there are instructions given for traditional Tarot layouts as well (for those who have no problem having Galadriel, Gandalf, and Frodo glean their fortune).



US Games Systems Inc., Stanford CT, **www.usgamessystems.com**

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STRATEGY & TIPS

Dungeon Keeper

Take Evil to the Next Level in Our Guide to Victory in the Underworld

by Chris Lombardi



IF I HAD A HAMMER Beat this Lord silly until he converts to the dark side. Don't let powerful creatures like this die on the rack. Continue healing them until they convert.

The life of Evil is, on the whole, a rewarding and fulfilling life. Who can deny the simple pleasure in the regular beating of small creatures, the fetid aroma of week-old carnage, the stubbing of one's cigar butt into eyes that plead for mercy?

But the Evil life has its troubles, too, which can sometimes be more than one can bear. At times like these, one can use a little help from a Keeper who has traveled a bit farther than you down the highway to Hell, someone who knows the pitfalls and switchbacks to be expected along the way. There is no shame in seeking the assistance of another. Especially when you use his wisdom to strengthen yourself and then return his favor with a hot, jagged dagger between the ribs.

Now, to business.

The following is a level-by-level guide through DUNGEON KEEPER, along with some notes on general strategy tips. There is so much to discuss that we've split the guide into two parts. In these pages, we'll walk you through Levels 7–17 and offer a few tips on dungeon design. You can find walkthroughs for the last three levels (18–20) and a sidebar on the interface online at our Web site, **www.computergaming.com**.

LEVEL 7 WISHVALE

Your opponents are feebleminded, so you don't have to rush. Train your creatures like crazy and attack when you're good and ready. This is the first level where you have Barracks available, and it's a good idea to lay a Barracks tile (just one will do) to attract hordes of fast-training Orcs. There are a few bands of Heroes to deal with and a wimpy fourth-level Lord, not to mention a few hidden surprises. Tunnel around to find an opening in the "rear" of the enemy's dungeon. **Secrets:** Resurrect (x2), Level Increase, Transfer.

LEVEL 8 TICKLE

Another fairly easy level. Your biggest problems here are that the enemy tunnels a lot (potentially opening many passageways between your dungeons) and that you'll have to tunnel far to reach gold. Your imps will tend to explore the open passages and get killed by the enemy. Deal with this by placing doors at the openings and locking them. As for the faraway gold, build extra Treasure Rooms near the gold veins to save your Imps some time. When you've slaughtered your enemies, explore the upper-right corner of the map for an extra-special treat. **Secrets:** Transfer, Hidden World.

LEVEL 9 MOONBRUSH WOOD

There are no rival Keepers on this level, just four Wizards and their heroic hordes, so you've got all the time in the world. There are other roving adventurers, too, such as the Archers to the north of your starting area. With any luck, you transferred a creature with range attack (or one impervious to lava) who can take care of them.

There's plenty of gold here and a lot of training to do, so mine like a fiend. Since you've discovered a Temple to the north, now is a good time to try the "sacrificing of the Imps" trick. Sacrifice all your Imps and then re-create twice the number at a reduced cost. This is also the first level in which Vampires appear, both as wanderers and as products of the new Graveyard rooms. Vampires are temperamental cusses, but are extremely powerful at high levels. Consider converting a Vampire to your cause and taking it with you to the next level.

Secrets: Transfer, Increase Level, Make Safe, Hidden World.

LEVEL 10 NEVERGRIM

The hardest thing about this level is deciding just how thoroughly you will destroy your rival Keeper. The dungeon is wide open, so there's little need to worry about dungeon design. Just slap down your rooms and get mining. You'll attract Hellhounds. Once you've trained three or four of them up to mid-level, they can pretty much take out the other Keeper by themselves. Don't forget to search the enemy's Library for special goodies. **Secrets:** Increase Level, Transfer.

LEVEL 11 HEARTH

This one can be a little hairy, especially if you didn't transfer a powerful creature from the previous level. You've got Heroes coming at you from all sides and only a few flimsy doors and traps to slow them down. First, get your creatures training and your workshop humming—you're going to need lots of doors and traps to thwart those adventurers. Don't bother mining gold—plenty will come to you from the Heroes' pockets. Next, find the Increase Level secrets hidden in a room to the west.

Once the Heroes start coming, you've got to be quick on your mouse. If you have a high-level creature from Level 10, simply power up the creature with magic and move it from hot spot to hot spot in order to win. Otherwise, you've got to carefully shepherd your bands from breach to breach. It can get really dicey—as in your dungeon heart may get beat on—but if you use all the creatures, magic, traps, and doors available, you should win the day. **Secrets:** Increase Level, Resurrect, Transfer.

LEVEL 12 ELF'S DANCE

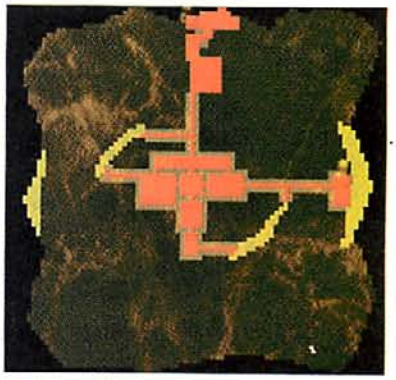
There are powerful creatures in the southern part of the map, guarded by a horde of weaker Heroes. If you transferred a powerful creature, it can probably take these guys by itself. If not, quickly train some creatures up to third or fourth level and go at them. The other Keepers seem very passive, so you won't have to worry about them until you're ready. Once you've found and converted the creatures (ah, Vampires!), start training them like mad. Soon, you should have the firepower to take out the other Keepers one at a time. For extra fun, try economic warfare by casting Sight of Evil on your opponents' likely mining sites and then casting Lightning on the mining Imps. If you keep this up, your opponents will soon be dead in the water. **Secrets:** Resurrect, Transfer.

LEVEL 13 BUFFY OAK

So it's two against one—that's bad odds, for them. You've got a little patch of gems and all the room you need, so expand and train those nasties. This level is won or lost in the middle area between you and them, just over the lava. You find yourself in a nasty war as your Imps and theirs try to capture this middle area. You've got to take control, and the best way to do that is to build and man Guard Posts to scare off the enemy Imps (Lightning Strikes on Imps are great fun, too). Once you've got control, you can eviscerate your opponents two ways: Fight a slow, grinding war down the long hallways to their dungeons or dig your own entrances into their dungeon hearts (the Reveal Map secret is especially helpful here). **Secrets:** Reveal Map, Increase Level.



A FINE HOWDY-DO When these Heroes break down that door, they'll be met by a corridor full of nasty traps. If they reach the next door, they'll be ripe for a few lightning bolts.



HERO-METICALLY SEALED Here's one way to aggressively tunnel and fortify against Heroes on Mirthshire. Notice that the gold is secured, but you can mine only the "inside" portions lest you break through and open up a hole.

LEVEL 14 SLEEPIBURGH

The keys to this level lie in the lower corners of the map: On the left are a couple of gem veins, and on the right is a workshop with a Reaper in the closet. Set up a huge Treasure Room next to the gems and you'll soon have more gold than you could ever use. There are two Keepers on this map, and while they are weak and not your prime objective, they can be annoying because they tend to tunnel toward your dungeon and make a mess of the landscape. To stop this, use a technique that's very helpful when dealing with Heroes and in multiplayer games: Seal off the area. At the start of the level, quickly dig a tunnel across the map above your dungeon and have your Imps fortify it. No one will bother you until you're ready to bother them. **Secrets:** none.

LEVEL 15 WOODLY RHYME

You face two Keepers and very powerful Heroes on this level. The Heroes are so powerful, in fact, that they may destroy the other Keepers. Train your creatures well before exploring, for as soon as you venture south, you'll face Level 10 Samurai and a Knight.

Once they're dealt with, all that remains is to explore the "haunted dungeon" to the south. This dungeon harbors many surprises, including a Hidden World secret in the midst of a "checkerboard" of traps. Take a high-level creature with Heal capabilities and Possess it. Then walk the creature over the traps repeatedly to disarm them.

After you've taken care of the Heroes, you can either attack the other Keepers and finish them off or cast Armageddon for quicker results. **Secrets:** Increase Level, Make Safe, Hidden World, Transfer.

LEVEL 16 TULIPSCENT

The wandering Heroes on this level can be deadly, so be ever vigilant and keep those walls sealed tight. (Use the Eye of Evil while you build so you don't accidentally tunnel into another area.) You start with two Horned Reapers, but they'll need time to train before they go ventilating skulls. Fortunately, each Reaper has its own bungalow, and the two should never be allowed to leave, except for a battle. Afterward, right back in they go! If they start to whine, throw some gold on them and toss them in their training rooms. Private Reaper residences, in general, are a good way of dealing with these testy chaps.



ICON SEE CLEARLY NOW In the heat of a large battle, you can use the combat panel to cast spells on creatures with perfect precision.

When you're ready to fight, you can save some time by using that Boulder Trap in the long central hallway. When a band of heroes moves alongside the hall, punch a hole in the wall and get out of Dodge. If your timing is right, you can crush a huge pack of do-gooders in one shot. Pâté will be served tonight!

Secrets: Multiply Creature (careful with this one!), Resurrect, Transfer.

LEVEL 17 MIRTHSHIRE

You have tough Heroes coming from all sides here, and gold is hard to come by. You'll have to play smart with your dungeon design to escape alive. You want a tightly fortified dungeon, but you also want to get some of that gold. Some fancy tunneling work is the key here. Immediately tunnel to both portals. The northerly portal will open into an area in which some Archers are imprisoned. Grab them and they will serve you well. Next, tunnel straight to the gold patch on the far right side of the map. You should also expand your existing dungeon rooms. Now, fortify like mad! Slap those Imps around—those Heroes will be on your case soon. You can also block off the closer patches of gold, but you should mine only the "insides" of the veins, since mining the "outsides" could open a breach. Once your dungeon is fortified, you can train your creatures while the gold lasts and then choose where you want to open your dungeon and fight. **Secrets:** Increase Level, Multiply Creatures, Make Safe, Hidden World.

Better Homes and Dungeons

Some Keepers have been known to build elaborate and beautiful dungeons. You can read all about them on the obituaries page. A successful Keeper is concerned only with maximum efficiency.

Design your dungeons with your creatures' most frequent trips in mind. Those trips include gold vein to Treasure Room; Lair, Training, and Library to Treasure Room; Lair, Training, and Library to Hatchery; Portal to Lair.

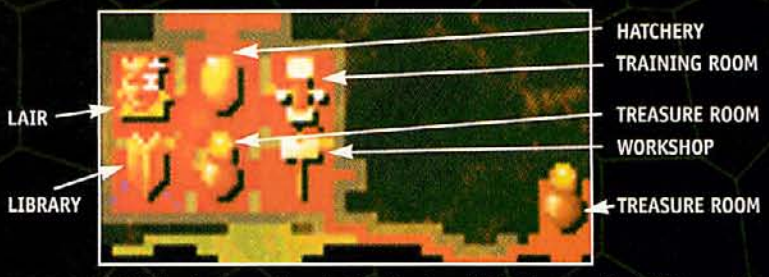
You should always have at least two Treasure Rooms—one in the middle of your dungeon, so that creatures have easy access on payday, and one next to your current gold source. The pennies you spend on the extra Treasure Rooms will come back in spades. If your creatures deplete the gold from the central Treasure Room, hand-carry gold from the outlying sources.

Always build rooms larger than you think they need to be. You'll need more room! Tearing down fortified walls to expand rooms is a waste of your Imps' time.

Build rooms as squarely as possible (a "maximally efficient" room is a 9 x 9 square) and don't let different room tiles touch each other.

Try to minimize the interior walls in your dungeon so that your Imps don't waste time fortifying. It's much faster to tear down a wall than to fortify it. If there is Impassable Rock nearby, mine to it and use it as a wall.

Prisons and Torture Chambers make good neighbors. Just pluck a Hero and plop him on the rack!



MODEL HOME This lovely dungeon in suburban Moonbrush Wood is a model of efficiency. A central Treasure Room and Hatchery are easily accessible from Lair, Library, Workshop, and Training Room. The rooms are spacious, the interiors walls have been kept to a minimum, and the linoleum has been freshly stained with the blood of the innocent. Notice the auxiliary Treasure Room near the fat vein of gold.

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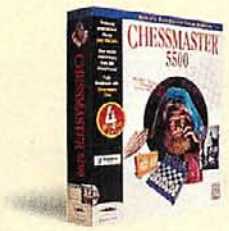
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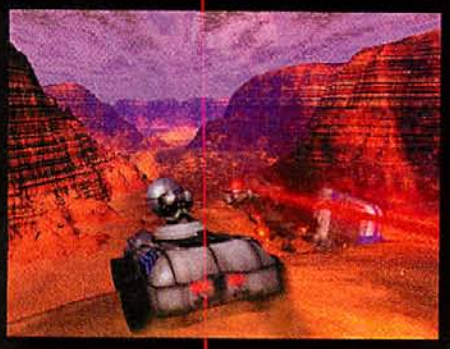
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STRATEGY & TIPS

iF-22

Energy Management Can Give You the Edge in Air Combat

by Tom Basham

Welcome to the first installment of "Rules of Engagement," our new series focusing on the nuts and bolts of air combat. In each installment of the series, we'll examine some issue of real-world air combat and illustrate our points by applying them to your favorite flight sims. This month, we scrutinize one of the most critical aspects of air combat—energy management—and how it comes into play in I-Magic's iF-22. Sim jocks talk a lot about "energy." From its conservation to its waste, energy is an integral part of air combat. What exactly is energy, though, and how do you manage it or waste it?

Money in the Bank

In simplest terms, aircraft "spend" energy to "buy" maneuvers. Pilots, like greedy bankers, try to maximize energy before a battle, then invest it wisely to "purchase" critical maneuvers during the fight.

First, let's briefly review those high-school physics classes. Energy comes in two types: kinetic and potential. In terms of air combat, kinetic energy equals airspeed. The faster an aircraft moves, the more kinetic energy it has. Potential energy, meanwhile, equates to altitude. But the two forms are interchangeable: An aircraft moving at high speed can convert its kinetic energy into altitude by climbing; an aircraft at high altitude can convert its potential energy into airspeed by diving. (As we'll explain in the sidebar, turn performance depends directly on airspeed.) If we push the banking analogy, kinetic energy (airspeed) works like cash, letting pilots immediately purchase maneuvers. Potential energy (altitude) works more like a savings account: You have to "withdraw" the money (by diving) before you can spend it.

That's all well and good, but what exactly does it mean? Obviously, no pilot whips out a slide rule and starts calculating in the middle of a dogfight. Instead, you need to learn the capabilities of your aircraft and the amount of energy various maneuvers require. That's where energy management enters the picture.

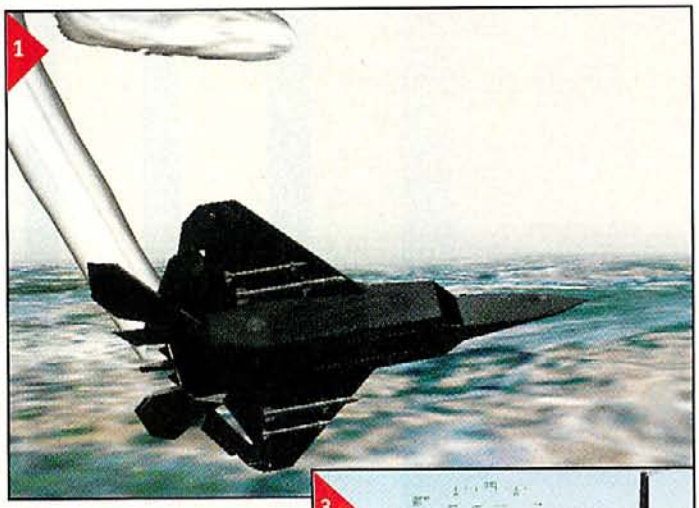
In short, energy management means ensuring that you have enough energy to execute the maneuvers you need to beat your opponent.

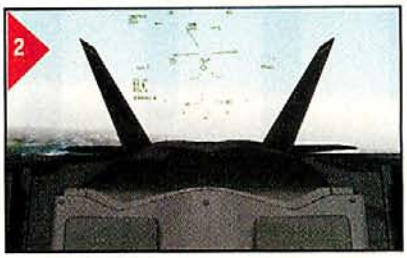
F-22 Facts and Figures

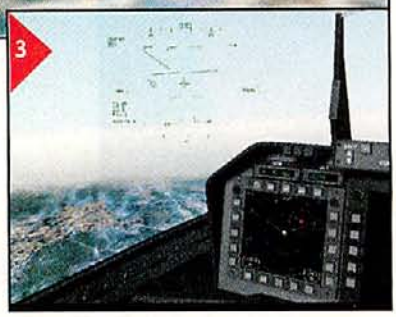
Turn performance is primarily dependent upon airspeed and g-load. In turn, g forces are dependent upon airspeed and angle of attack (AOA). The angle of attack is the angle between the wing and the airflow; in simplest terms, think of it as the angle between where the aircraft's nose is pointed and the direction the aircraft is actually moving. For a set AOA (say 10 degrees), you'll pull more g's flying at 400 knots than at 200 knots. Given the importance of AOA and g-load, let's examine the F-22's performance.

Flight tests indicate that iF-22's simulated Raptor has an instantaneous g-load of at least 9g's above about 400kts, and as much as 10.5g's above 500kts. The jet bleeds speed quickly, though, and rapidly decelerates below 300kts. With a standard combat loadout of 6 AIM-120C and two AIM-9X, sustained g varies with altitude, ranging from about 5.5g's at 330kts at sea level, to 4.3g's at 290kts at 11,000 feet, to 3.0g's at 230kts at 25,000 feet.

Although these figures will vary somewhat, they illustrate a very important point: iF-22's simulated jet has a very impressive instanta-







neous turn capability, but it bleeds speed rapidly. Despite high-thrust engines and supercruise capability (supersonic flight without using afterburner), one good yank on the stick cuts the F-22 down to size rather quickly. The thrust vectoring system provides excellent nose control at low speed if you disengage the AOA limiter, but you risk departing the aircraft from controlled flight if you maneuver too aggressively. The F-22 might be the new king of the hill, but you still need to exercise good energy management to fly it effectively.

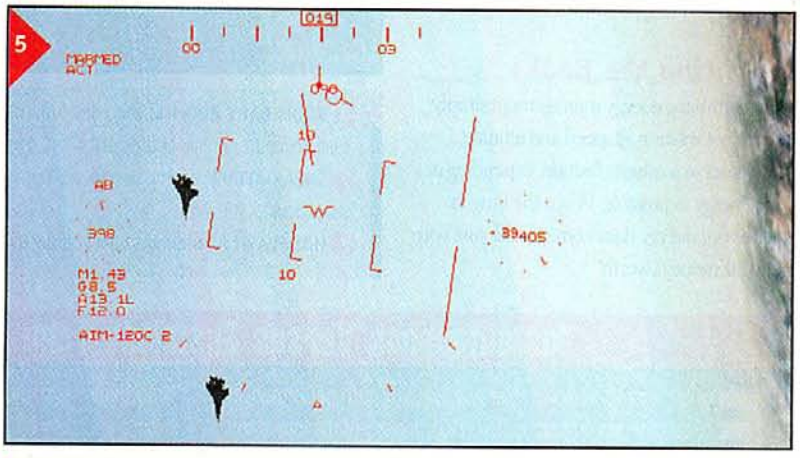
The G Spot

First of all, don't waste g's. Don't pull into a 9-g "bat turn" when 2g's will do—this will conserve your energy. Sim pilots, who don't benefit from actually feeling the g's they're pulling, tend to execute harder turns than necessary in many circumstances. If you find yourself on the defensive, you must be especially judicious with your turns. Don't waste energy in a high-g turn when the enemy's nose isn't approaching a firing angle. Let up on the stick a little, lower the g's, and try to regain some airspeed. Wait until the bandit becomes an imminent threat, then give a good heave on the stick to increase the aspect angle and disrupt his shot. Pulling 8g's just before the bandit fires is a far more effective defense than pulling 4g's continuously.

Next, look for opportunities to recoup energy. Say, for example, that the bandit dives past you during the fight. If you're on the offensive and close to taking a shot, you should press the attack. If, however, you're in a more neutral position, you might let up on the g, level out, and try to regain some airspeed without giving up any altitude. The bandit will gain some airspeed during his dive, but he'll have to expend it in order to climb back to the fight. You'll have a substantial energy edge when the bandit returns to your altitude. Any chance to relax your g-load without surrendering angles to the bandit is a chance to regain energy.

Also, look for opportunities to convert energy instead of simply bleeding it away. For example, if you come charging into the fight at extremely high speed and see that





Turn and Burn

Fighter aircraft measure turn performance in two ways: turn radius and turn rate. Ideally, a fighter wants a very small turn radius coupled with a very high turn rate. As the name implies, turn rate specifies how quickly the aircraft's nose moves through the turn. Usually measured in degrees per second, turn rate is basically dependent on g-load divided by airspeed. In other words, increasing g-load usually increases turn rate, while increasing airspeed generally reduces it.

Turn radius, the second measure of aircraft turn performance, measures the size of the invisible circle being circumscribed in the sky. Measured in linear terms, such as "2,500 feet," turn radius is determined primarily as airspeed squared divided by g-load. In other words, a high g-load substantially decreases turn radius while high speed substantially increases it.

Unfortunately, lift is a "bounded" quantity compared to airspeed; fighters can reach maximum g's (generally between 6g's and 9g's for modern aircraft) well before reaching maximum speed. Consequently, attempting a turn while flying too fast degrades overall turn performance and wastes energy. The speed that maximizes turn rate while minimizing turn radius is called corner speed.

1. **G WHIZ** The smoke trail from this damaged F-22 shows the plane's ability to pull very high angles of attack.
2. **OVERSHOOT** To avoid flying past your target, convert excess speed to altitude.
3. **BROKEN PADLOCK** Unfortunately, F-22's padlock doesn't always focus on the enemy, and you'll need to check the edges of the screen to locate the enemy.
4. **TURKEY SHOOT** A single F-22 should eat these three MiG-23s for lunch, so don't send your entire flight against them.
5. **TIGHT TURN** Use the F-22's high instantaneous g capability to bring your weapons to bear on target.

you're going to overshoot the target, you could slow down by chopping the throttle, extending the brakes, and dropping the gear. This will slow you, but you'll lose that energy forever. A better tactic is to roll out and climb above the target. Climbing will slow you, but some of that lost airspeed becomes altitude—which you can later convert back to airspeed.

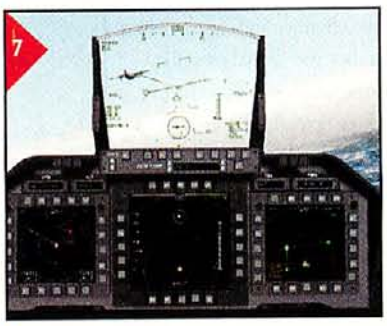
This aspect is especially important in IF-22: With the plane's supercruise capability and high-altitude performance, you'll probably start most fights with a substantial speed or altitude advantage. If you enter a fight at mach 1.3, you shouldn't consider pulling a high-g turn and scrubbing away that energy.

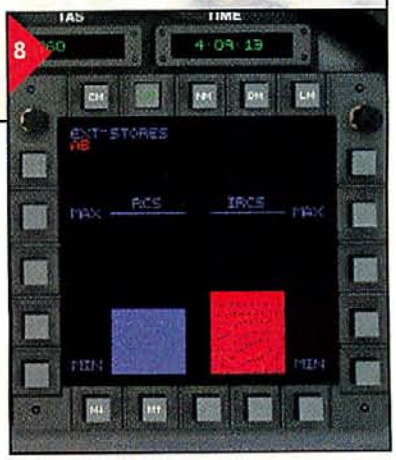
Know your enemy's capabilities. If he has a better turning aircraft, don't waste precious energy trying to outturn him. Instead, try something else, like hit-and-run tactics. Keep your speed high, attack the enemy, then extend away and prepare for a new attack. The F-22 has a substantial thrust advantage over older adversaries, such as the MiG-23. In such circumstances, try taking the fight into the vertical. If the bandit can't lift his nose up to you, he can't shoot you, and you've gained the advantage.

Balancing the Books

In summary, energy management simply means not wasting airspeed and altitude. Always act in a miserly fashion, expending as little energy as possible. When the time to spend your energy does come, make sure you get your money's worth!







6 BOOM BABY BOOM To keep this from happening to you, turn 90 degrees to incoming missiles while they're still at a distance and release chaff and flares as they approach.

7 SNEAK ATTACK Enemy aircraft are less likely to see you coming if you attack from their low six-o'clock.

8 HOT FLASH Afterburners substantially increase your infrared signature.

Instantaneous Versus Sustained Turn Performance

Fighter aircraft actually have two types of turn performance: instantaneous and sustained. Both types are measured in terms of turn rate and turn radius, but the values vary greatly between instantaneous and sustained turn performance. Basically, lift (or g-load) depends on air density, wing area, airspeed, and angle of attack. At a given angle of attack, a higher airspeed results in higher g-loads. Higher g-loads, however, are accompanied by increased drag, which slows the aircraft. In other words, *pulling g's uses up energy.*

Instantaneous turn performance, therefore, describes the best turn the aircraft can execute for a fraction of a second before drag begins eroding speed. When speed drops, available g drops, and turn performance suffers. Decreasing g, though, decreases drag also. Eventually, drag reaches equilibrium with the engines' thrust. This is the aircraft's sustained turn performance, a steady-state condition the aircraft could theoretically maintain until it runs out of fuel (assuming the pilot has a steady hand).

Note that *sustained turn performance* does not mean "turn performance at corner speed." Corner speed is the speed that provides the best possible turn performance, which may or may not be sustainable for any significant length of time.

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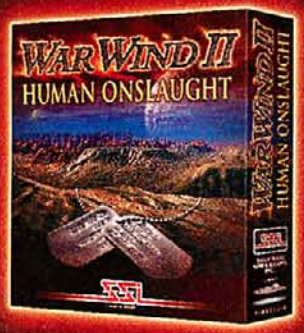
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Taming the Raptor

Energy management is just one of the keys to success in IF-22. The following advice could mean the difference between victory and a ride home under the silk.

Angling for a Shot

The angle of attack (AOA) limiter—or, more precisely, the ability to *disable* the AOA limiter—gives the F-22 a substantial combat edge. With the limiter engaged, the F-22 enjoys decent turn performance. With the limiter disengaged, the F-22 can reach angles of attack well over 70 degrees (thanks to its thrust vectoring system). High AOA capability, especially at low speed, lets you swing the aircraft's nose off the velocity vector onto targets that would normally be safely outside your weapons envelope.

Unfortunately, high AOA also means high drag, and using high AOA maneuvers quickly bleeds speed. You may get the first opponent, but now you're a slow, easy target for his wingman. What's more, large rudder inputs at high AOA may cause the F-22 to depart from controlled flight. All the high-tech avionics and weapons in the world can't help you while your aircraft tumbles out of the sky.

Therefore, minimize your excursions into high AOA realm by fighting within the F-22's normal limitations and save the high AOA exploits for emergencies. Try defining the AOA limiter key sequence, ALT+A, onto a programmable joystick. You can then keep the limiter engaged for normal operations, but quickly disengage it as needed during a dogfight. If you feel the aircraft slipping out of control, reengage the limiter and let the flight control system help you.

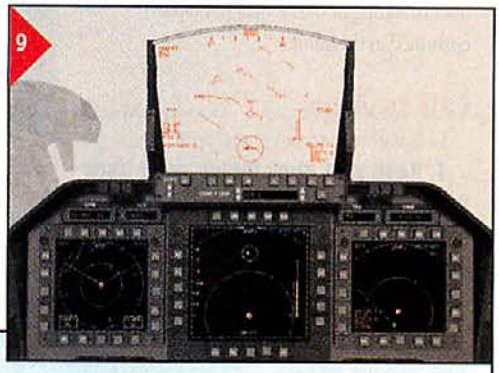
Hit and Missile

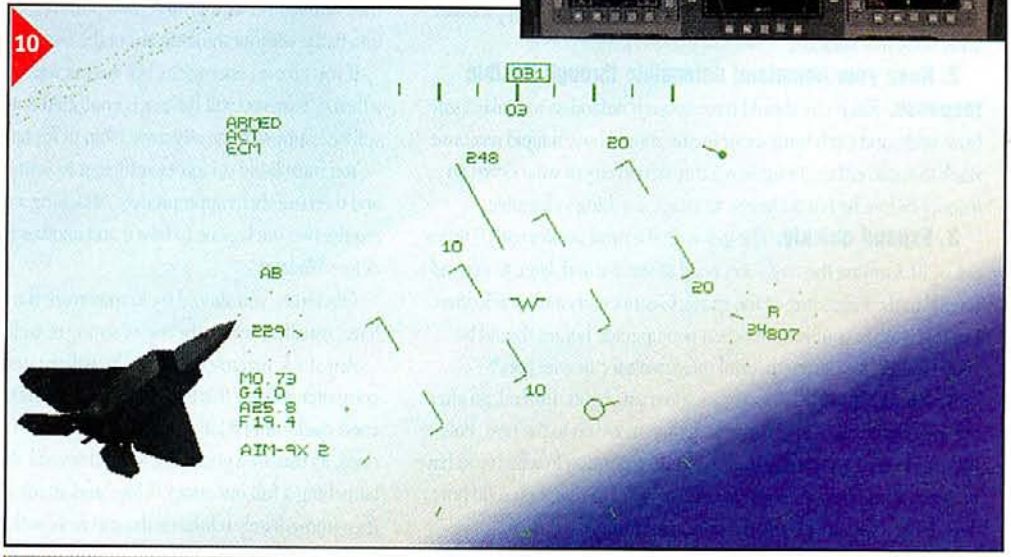
The AIM-120 AMRAAM is a powerful weapon, providing that you use it correctly. Remember that missiles fired at a fleeing target have to fly farther than those fired at a bandit coming head-on. A missile accelerates quickly to top speed, then its motor shuts down and the missile glides the rest of the way to target, decelerating as it goes. The farther it flies, the more it decelerates. Its turn performance—like that of an aircraft—also depends on its kinetic energy. Therefore, the farther the missile flies, the less energy it has when it reaches the target, giving the bandit a better chance to evade.

To maximize missile effectiveness, don't shoot your missiles as soon as a target comes in range. Instead, maneuver toward the target, closing to 75 percent of the missile's range before firing. This ensures that the missile will have more energy when it reaches the target, increasing the likelihood of a kill.

Keep in mind that smaller missiles, such as the AIM-9, carry smaller warheads. Even a direct hit by one of these missiles may not be sufficient to bring down large, multiengined fighters. The key to bringing down large fighters, such as the Su-35, lies in destroying both engines, and a single AIM-9 usually can't do that. Against really big targets, cargo aircraft, for example, it's generally more efficient to use the cannon than to waste multiple AIM-9s, especially when supplies start getting tight during a long campaign!

The F-22's stealth characteristics play an important role in bringing the bird back home after a mission. Unfortunately, its inherent stealth can be easily defeated through improper flight operations. Maximize stealth by avoiding unnecessary afterburner usage and by carrying weapons only in the internal bays.





9 **CLOUDY DAZE** Be careful in the clouds—it's easy to get too close to your opponent.
10 **RIGHT-HAND MAN** Keep an eye on your wingmen and keep them involved in the fight.

STRATEGY & TIPS

Warlords III

Usher In the Reign of Heroes With These Battle-proven Strategies

by Tim "the Destroyer" Carter



DEAD MEAT Make sure you have enough troops in your army to defend your conquered city or you could lose it to the enemy's reclamation forces.

You know, there's nothing like a horde of rampaging undead soldiers burning down your home city and despoiling distant family members to get a guy hot under the collar. What is there to do but strike back hard at the evil armies?

WARLORDS III boasts a tight, entertaining contest against either the computer or a human opponent. Keeping would-be conquerors at bay requires flexibility and a sound understanding of the tactical principles enshrined in the game.

Call to Arms

Let's start with some general principles:

1. Keep your army intact; don't trade units in wasteful battles. Don't attack unless you can get a sustainable result, and except in extreme circumstances, don't attack unless you can win with minimal losses. In some cases, you will have to wear down the enemy with suicide armies. In these cases make sure the appropriate army commits hara-kiri.

2. Keep your homeland defensible through flexible response. Each city should have enough defenders to make it safe from raids, and each territory or region should have a rapid response stack that can either strengthen a threatened city or wear down an invader before he has a chance to attack anything vulnerable.

3. Expand quickly. The guy with the most armies wins 9 times out of 10. Getting the cities you need to survive and, later, to expand is crucial in the beginning of the game. Get out early and attack often. For this reason, your priority when you upgrade heroes should be speed rather than strength, until most neutral cities are gone.

4. Be systematic. Don't pick too many fights. Instead, go after one (preferably weaker) enemy first, then move on to the next. Follow this rule even if geography leads you into a position in which you have to attack a number of people at once in order to maintain solid borders. Unless you are clearly the dominant force, don't do it.

5. Use your bonuses wisely. Take the time to build effective armies. For many of the more exotic races, the disparity in troop abilities is such that you will benefit greatly from combined forces.

Keep Together

Like its predecessors, WARLORDS III rewards players who preserve their armies and their empire, and punishes those who rush headlong into battle without thinking about the consequences.

If you take an enemy city but are too weak to hold it for more than a turn or two, you will have accomplished nothing. The computer AI will be happy to trade city ownership tit for tat for as long as you like.

You must build up forces sufficient to actually hold what you take, and then use them appropriately. Attacking a city, therefore, may require two stacks, one to take it and another to ensure that it will be defensible later.

Obviously, you should try to maximize the bonuses your stacks will have, usually through the use of strong or well-equipped heroes.

Any stack, regardless of its units, will get worn down over time. The computer will use this to its advantage, aggressively attacking weakened stacks until it kills your hero. Unless you are fond of suicide missions, it's usually a good idea to send several stacks together when launching a full-out attack. Move and attack with the strongest stack, then immediately reinforce the survivors with units from the following stacks. This way, your heroes are never vulnerable.

When you play against human opponents, take some care to disguise your troops as they march. The computer will always display the

rear-most unit in the fighting order on the top of your stack. Usually, this means that stacks containing heroes or other powerful units are easy to spot and follow.

A sneaky Warlord will alter the order in which his units fight, putting, say, light infantry at the back of the army. Then, every powerful stack accompanied by a single light infantry unit (or other weakling) will be effectively camouflaged.

The Best Defense Is...Defense

Once you have a relatively large empire in place, take some care to garrison it well. Every city should have three to four decent defending units. These units need not be expensive, but they should be able to repel a nuisance attack and take out at least one or two attackers from even a powerful invader.

There's no point in trying to make every city you own impregnable. You'd never have enough units to attack, and the cost would be prohibitive. Moreover, while you are busy securing what you have already, you can be sure that your stronger opponents will be expanding the size and strength of their empires.

You can improve your defense through judicious spending on fortifications and by choosing the right defenders. In general, you can expect to gain attack strength through fortification bonuses. It's therefore a good idea to use relatively cheap infantry with low attack but high defensive values as garrison troops. These guys take a long time to die and should give you ample opportunity to wipe out one or two attackers. Generally, it's a bad idea to use specialized units like elven archers as garrison troops. They don't have the hits necessary to sustain a siege and they tend to die easily if their archery attack fails. A sneaky raider with a few high hits and low attack units can often kill archers and the like at little cost to his troops.

Cities=Victory

Expand quickly at the start of the game. The guy with the greatest production and the fewest enemies will usually win. Get as much as you can without causing too many diplomatic rifts.

Actually, the new diplomatic system offers aspiring Warlords the chance to launch Pearl Harbor-type raids on a consistent basis—but without the diplomatic downside. By frequently checking the diplomacy screen it is easy to see who is becoming more hostile and how long it will likely take them to declare war. If you notice a neighbor on the slippery slope to hostilities, immediately vector a stack or two to a bordering city under your control. Time your movement out of the city so that your armies are ready to attack as soon as his declaration of war has removed any diplomatic impediments.



HIDE AND SEEK To prevent the enemy from seeing your heroes or powerful stacks, reorder your troops so they see only the weakest unit.

The computer tends to make the decision to attack based on strategic rather than tactical considerations. As a result, it often does little or nothing to prepare its front-line cities before declaring war. A quick attack can take the wind out of your opponent's sails and leave you fighting over his cities, rather than your own.

Preemptive strategies can also be effective during the campaign game. One way that the designers have made the campaign scenarios difficult is by giving the Lord Bane and Radek armies that begin the game the middle of the map. This allows the evil empires to grow from multiple centers at the same time. If the separate empires are allowed to unite, you may well be without allies and facing a map that is 75 percent enemy-owned.

To avoid this, aggressively hunt down the wandering undead armies at the very start of the scenario. This will slow your own expansion somewhat, but will make a huge difference in the rate at which the bad guys grow. Coincidentally, it will also help the neutral or allied powers get established, particularly along the Undead King's borders. In many instances, this will allow you to colonize the better part of the map while



A DAY OF INFAMY Have a stack wait outside a weak enemy city just as the enemy declares war. You can thus attack quickly and score easy victories.



GOOD GEOGRAPHY PAYS OFF This is a perfect border city in the classic "Illuria" scenario. All enemies must either march past it or attack it. Both options allow most cities behind it to be garrisoned with a weak force.

others hold the enemy at bay until you are ready to deliver the coup de grâce.

The World of Difference

Geography is also important to winning scenarios against human opponents, as they are considerably less trustworthy than the computer. If you follow the principle of having a well-defended frontier combined with a relatively weakly held interior, then geography and reconnaissance become vitally important factors.

Assume for a moment you are playing against multiple opponents with hidden movement as an option. You must have a system in place for discovering invading armies before they are in a position to attack. One method is to station picket units along logical invasion routes. You may also want to attack and raze an enemy city that lies close to your border. This must be done with some care, as you definitely want to avoid an all-out "scorched earth" war in which any city that is lost is immediately torched.

Also, if an opponent has a city in an awkward position and you aren't positive that you can hold it against counterattacks, you may want to consider flattening it so that invaders have to walk rather than vector into your territory.

Speaking of razing, if the raze option is on, you need to beware of punitive missions by computer opponents on the verge of losing. If a computer-controlled empire is nearly destroyed, the computer will sometimes create a single killer stack out of its remaining strong units and go on the rampage. Every city taken will be burned to the ground, and you may find yourself considerably weaker by the time that particular race has been defeated.

To avoid this, try to take a dying empire's last few cities simultaneously. Remember, once all cities have fallen, any troops in the field are destroyed at the beginning of that player's next turn.

Race-Specific Tips

Here is some advice to guide you in selecting and using the more popular race types.

Undead

While some undead troops are wimpy, almost all carry a negative bonus via fear or chaos. This gives you a huge potential advantage because it offers the possibility of negating the total advantages normally available to your enemies. The most powerful of heroes may have little or no effect on their own armies when confronted with undead troops. Concerted attacks can take out the most powerful enemy armies quite easily.

Cavalry

Races such as the Selentines and the Horse Lords work best in the open. You must use your mobility to confront the enemy on the plains. Your armies tend to be less well-suited to sieges, although cheap heavy-infantry can be used to soften up just about any position, as long as you don't mind heavy losses.

Elves

Elven archers are among the most fun of all the units on the board. Generate these units en masse and throw them at anything that looks dangerous. Be prepared to lose a lot of them, though, and remember, they make lousy garrisons. Most of your units have weak defenses, so be prepared for high losses. You can't count on a stack surviving for long unless you have special troops, so make sure your attacks are coordinated and that any stack with a hero can be quickly reinforced.

Dwarves/Orcs

Slow but durable, your troops are ideal for attrition warfare. You'll have to work hard to surprise anyone, though. Also, your lack of a truly impressive unit means that you will have to depend on numbers to win your wars. A large city pool is critical, as is the proper convergence of forces at the right point.

Giants

Strong units combined with fear and chaos bonuses make the giants a fearsome enemy—if they can get established. Guard your troops well, as your armies are harder to build and cannot be thrown away. Don't alienate the elves, as their archers are tailor-made giant killers. If you make it to the mid-game with any sort of empire you should do well.



ARMY OF DARKNESS This undead stack scores -4 for chaos and -4 for fear, allowing it to negate up to +8 of enemy modifiers.

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STRATEGY & TIPS

X-COM: Apocalypse

Strategies to Counterattack the Insidious Alien Menace

by Tim Carter



One of the nice things about X-COM: APOCALYPSE is how diverse the alien menace is in the way it evolves over time as you discover more about the aliens and the alien dimension. You'll likely spend most of your time in the tactical-combat mode, but there is still a lot of planning to be carried out at the strategic level. Contrary to what the manual suggests, don't go overboard on research spending, particularly early in the game. You'll have lots of time to research all of the technology you need with only a few lab complexes.

However, at the start of the game you may wish to buy a second biology lab, as you should reap a rich harvest of live and dead aliens in the first battle. Once you begin to take out alien spacecraft, you'll need an extra quantum-physics lab and eventually you will want large physics and biology facilities as well. But I didn't build more than one of each, and I rarely felt that my research was lagging behind.

Sam's Munitions & Auto Shop

The same can't be said for mechanical workshops. In the later stages of the game you build almost all your own equipment, including ammunition. You can expect to go through advanced missiles (disrupter bombs and multibombs) at a pretty good clip and will need one or two large workshops producing each type of ammo just to maintain a decent military.

As you destroy the more interesting alien ships, you should begin an intensive workshop building campaign. Even before this you should be stockpiling mechanics, as they are often more scarce than facilities. Don't worry if they sit idle for a few weeks, you'll be happy that you recruited early once you have to build and equip an entire fleet from scratch.

Speaking of stockpiling, buy every last Prophet and Justice missile you can right from the start. Shooting down UFOs requires missiles—

▸▸▸Continued on pg 415

Damage Is Collateral, You Know

Don't be afraid to cause a little damage when you're fighting. You can root aliens out of difficult positions by literally shooting the floor out from beneath their feet. In some cases you can finish off whole gaggles of brainsuckers by blasting a supporting pillar and causing them to fall a few stories.

On base defense, the computer deliberately gives you a lousy starting placement. You can overcome this by realigning your squads so that two soldiers start each defense mission with your unarmed workers. This will disperse your troops while moving them closer to the entry zones. Also, you can have your soldiers drop a weapon or two near your scientists before they leave, giving them a rudimentary defensive ability if they are discovered. It's a good idea to have your scientists hide, by the way. (Bathrooms are my favorite hiding spots.)

When you use psionic attacks, don't be discouraged if the aliens you control have no movement points left. Team up your psionic troops so that you control an enemy with one attack, then recontrol him with a second trooper on the following turn. If you know you won't get a second shot and the controlled enemy unit has no time left, you can still order him to drop all of his weapons. If the aliens gain control of some of your soldiers , you can free them by killing the controlling alien (identified by a tiny red skull).

Once you develop the ability to probe the alien dimension, don't rush headlong into attack. Airspace on the other side is decidedly

▸▸▸Continued on pg 415

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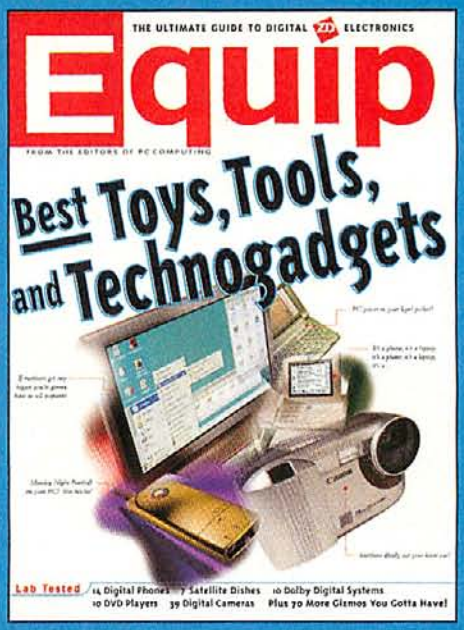
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Continued from pg 412

lots and lots of missiles. Even if all your vehicles are fully loaded, buy, buy, buy. Trust me, you'll need the ammo later.

What about vehicles, anyway? Until you're flush with cash, don't waste money buying big aircraft—they are very expensive, tend to draw enemy attention, and don't carry that much more firepower. For the price of a single Valkyrie Interceptor you can buy about 10 Hovercars, each carrying two-thirds as many missiles as an Interceptor. This means that when you attack a UFO you can have 20 missile launchers firing instead of only three. Also, having multiple craft means that the enemy's fire will be dispersed, and losing a ship won't be a financial catastrophe.

A good attack strategy is to fly toward the enemy at low altitude, then pop up to level two and switch to aggressive mode. Your craft will immediately begin firing missiles at the targeted UFO. When the UFO fires back, wait until the first hit and then retreat. If ten attackers follow this strategy simultaneously, you should knock down UFOs left and right.

Generally, beam weapons are a waste of time until you can build advanced craft and shields, at which point your ships will be durable enough for beam weapons to have an effect. (By then, you should also have heavy disruptors, which pack quite a punch.)

On the ground, don't expand your operations too quickly. You don't need a second base right away; a properly equipped Hovercar or Valkyrie will get you to any crash or investigation site quickly and easily.

If you feel you must have another base, make sure you can afford it. Raids on your enemies are an easy way to raise cash. The Cult of Sirius is a good place to start, but you can also raid the various criminal organizations without much fear of political backlash. Keep in mind, though, that once you make an enemy he will likely muster up a raid or two of his own.

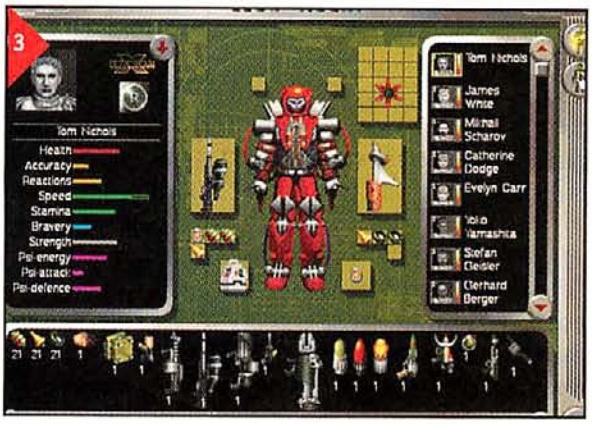
Making Combat a Real Gas

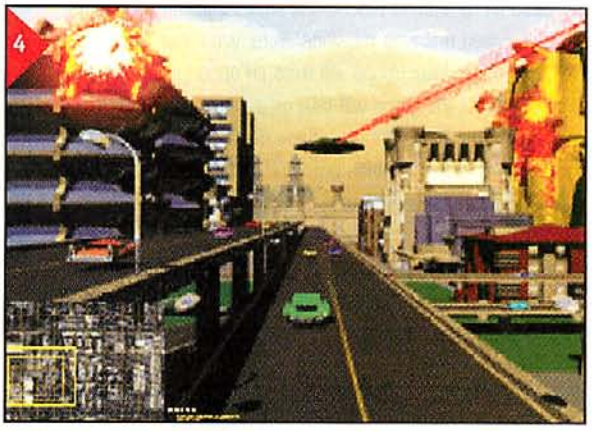
Tactical combat differs dramatically depending on the mode you select. By the time you get to the tough battles (storming escorts and motherships, in particular) you definitely want an experienced, battle-hardened platoon. (One way to judge your troops' abilities is to see how much their accuracy drops when you switch their weapons from snap shot to auto. Experienced troopers can auto-fire with little loss in accuracy—a highly useful bonus.)

In either mode, use androids as your point men. You should view androids the way Sir Douglas Haig viewed Canadians: Their skills are nice, but it doesn't matter if they die, and besides, they're easy to replace. Androids are less susceptible to gas, immune to psionic attacks, and cannot be brainsucked. Because they don't improve









Continued from pg 412

hostile, especially until you can build annihilators with multiple disrupter launchers and large shields. Bide your time and build up your stocks of ammo until you are ready to get in, survive, and get out again.

Travel to the alien dimension takes a day. Actually, you can leave anytime, but you always return at midnight. A smart commander will send dimensional raids at around 10 p.m.—giving them time to complete their mission without leaving Earth undefended for the entire day.

Once in the alien dimension, remember that you are here for one reason: To blow things up. Take lots of explosives and don't fumble around in an attempt to sweep the entire area. Use cloaking devices to minimize exposure and trash everything that looks remotely like your target. Don't pull punches—these aliens are trying to trash *your* world!

1 **NO CLEAN SWEEPS ALLOWED** Unlike X-COM: UFO DEFENSE, you can't afford the time to kill every alien when you're in the alien's backyard. Go in, cause as much damage as quickly as possible, and get out.

2 **LITTLE RED CORVETTE 2200** Tempting as it may be to buy a cool Interceptor, you can buy about 10 Hovercars for the same price—more missiles, more dispersed targets.

3 **SURVIVAL INSTINCTS** Even with the new SVGA-graphics look and cool new weapons, one thing hasn't changed: To get through the tough battles at the end, you'll need a rested, well-trained squad of veterans.

4 **FIRE IN THE SKY** When spacecraft show up to trash the city, everyone keeps driving calmly on to work—unless you cause collateral damage.

with experience or training, they are dispensable and easily replaced.

Use gas grenades as often as possible. Gas takes out large concentrations of troops, requires little skill or accuracy, and preserves enemy weaponry for resale. Also, it causes no collateral damage.

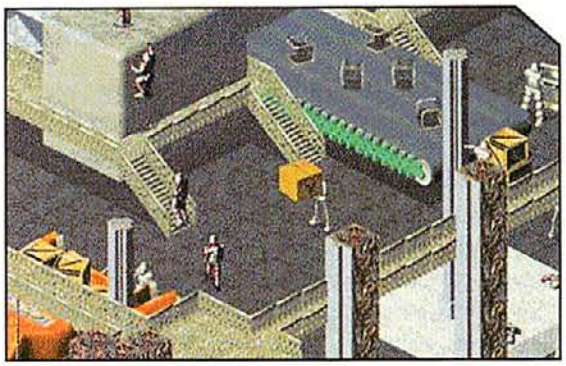
Tactical Missions: Speed Kills

All three X-COM games, while enjoyable, suffer from the same nagging little flaw. During each, you are subjected to too many highly similar tactical missions before you progress to the next stage of the game. In X-COM: APOCALYPSE, you can employ a number of tricks to speed up the process.

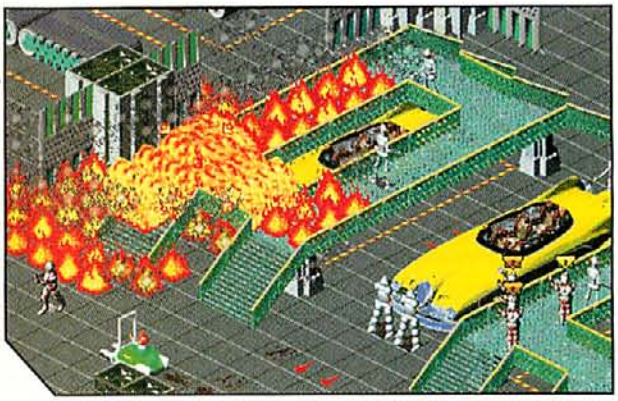
1 Use the alien activity monitor to selectively respond to live alien reports. Don't respond until the host organization is in real danger. This will allow you to skip many missions, albeit at a cost of lost points.

2 Build an all-android psycho-risk squad that can be sent on high-speed real-time missions. Sure, you'll lose a few people, and your regular troops will miss an opportunity to build experience, but the game will take on a whole new level of enjoyment. The fun is doubled if you don't care about collateral damage. A mission in which everyone carries rocket launchers can be a great stress-reliever.

3 Play in realtime, especially on building raids. After a month or two the regular building investigations should be a piece of cake. If you're not building up a second platoon, send in the big boys in realtime, put them in good firing positions, and then turn up the speed.



WE EXIST TO SERVE Mr. Data may not agree, but androids are expendable in X-COM: APOCALYPSE.



ALIEN-STYLE BABY BACK RIBS Despite any anatomical differences, aliens enjoy being barbecued about as much as any human.

4 Using androids as point men (do androids have gender?), run your entire platoon in line formation to the most likely alien hideouts. Once again, the first guy in may suffer, but the rest of you will do just fine.

5 Double your shields. If your soldiers are not carrying a lot of extra equipment, have them carry two disrupter shields. When the first goes, the second will kick in. This gives extra protection if you don't have the patience to proceed cautiously.

During a running battle, your troops can pick up and use any enemy weapon already researched by your scientists. There will be more to retrieve if you use gas, a useful thing to keep in mind if your front-line troops are armed with toxin-pistols and run out of ammo.

In turn-based mode, it's often safer to keep your men in line formations. If your point man identifies an enemy unit, have him retreat and bring up soldiers one at a time to take shots or throw grenades. Don't bunch up, though, as the computer likes grenades and rockets.

In real-time mode, adopt a more sweeping formation with interlocking fields of fire. Once you fix an enemy position, bring other squads in from flanking positions to overwhelm your opponents with fire from multiple directions. Often, you will come under fire from opponents you can't see. Use smoke (generally unnecessary in turn-based games) to close with enemy, again using flanking maneuvers where possible.

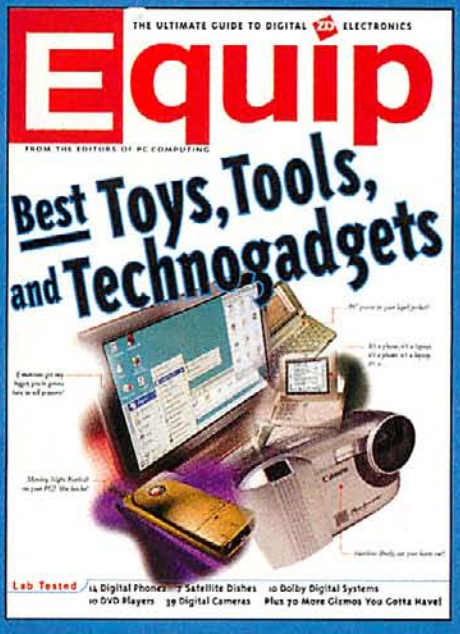
You won't often be able to sweep the entire map–a strategy that worked well in X-COM: UFO DEFENSE. Instead, try to fix the enemy in place and saturate the area—either with gas, explosives, or projectile fire. Be sure to watch your back, especially in real-time mode. The computer is more likely to try flanking maneuvers in realtime and will happily send brainsuckers underneath or over the battlefield.

Real-time games go faster, but require greater precision. You must bring up your forces equally. In a turn-based game a soldier can throw two grenades and duck for cover. If the grenades are gas, he or she will have a decent chance of disabling anything dangerous. In realtime, though, the enemy will open fire before you see them and keep firing as you move. Don't be afraid to chuck your advance in order to concentrate your forces.

Ambushing aliens as they come through the doors of a ship is much more effective in real-time: Many units can fire at once and you are not dependent on reaction times. In a turn-based game you're better off on the offensive, sending scouts inside to identify targets and then rushing several units into range.

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WALKTHROUGH

Extreme Assault

Part I of the Ultimate EXTREME ASSAULT Walkthrough and Strategy

by Gordon Goble

EXTREME ASSAULT wants to kill you. It wants to fry you amid fire and brimstone and a furious clash of metal-crunching weaponry. To make an already serious situation downright grave, you'll have to slice and dice your way through either the "Difficult" or "Extreme" levels to even stand a chance of finishing the thing.

In all honesty, the game is so big and so treacherous that a thorough strategy guide would fill a book. As it is, we're splitting our strategy guide into two parts. This month we take a walkthrough of the more difficult missions of Operations 1 and 2, along with tips and tactics. Next month, we'll reveal mission walkthroughs for Operations 3–6.

Rather than discuss every mission, we'll sample some of the more important ones—spots where a few carefully implemented tactics will help you gain an advantage. Good luck and happy hunting.

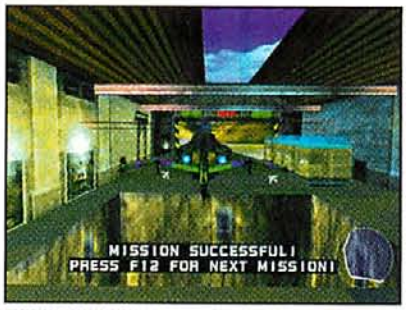


HOLY POWER-UPS Who says church is boring? This one in Operation 1, Mission 4, has lots of goodies stashed inside.

MISSION WALKTHROUGHS

OPERATION 1 MISSION 1

Admittedly, surviving the game's opening foray is not exactly a strenuous exercise. Knock off the pair of enemy choppers, then proceed directly to Mission 2, right? Wrong. The secret is right under your nose, so to speak. Head back to your own hangar, drag your AH-23 along the tarmac so its nose is pointed down, and blast a hole in the middle of the hangar floor. Voilà! An underground passage is exposed, revealing a number of options—to the right are several lovely weapons upgrades and to the left a portal to Mission 6.



SECRET LEVEL The AH-23 hovers menacingly over a freshly opened hangar cavity in Operation 1. Inside are the weapons you need and a portal to Mission 6.

OPERATION 1 MISSION 4

Kill everything in sight, then pop the top off the church tower. It may be sacrilegious, but the bounty inside is oh so yummy.

OPERATION 1 MISSION 5

Severely outnumbered and frightfully outgunned, you must start working right away, before the convoy spreads itself too thin. Get the center of the pack into targeting range by lowering your chopper to the ground, select any of the vehicles in the center, and hit the Smart Bomb space bar. If you've moved fast enough, you'll take out two or three helicopters as well and be blessed with one hell of a fireworks display.

Mission 5 also gives you your first shot at the T1 tank, but finding it is another question. After you dispose of any bad dudes who survived your initial onslaught, move up to the top of the hill just before the village, turn around, and follow the road back down. Begin counting the trees on your right against the mountainside, and when you get to number 7, blow



BOMBS AWAY A well-placed Smart Bomb shows its potential at the opening of Operation 1, Mission 5.

it up. Blow up the portion of mountain directly behind it as well (it's very inconspicuous) to uncover the secret TI lair.

OPERATION 1 MISSION 6

Another secret stockpile awaits your arrival. Pull a U-turn, head back inside the tunnel whence you came and look for a big rotating fan to your right. Shoot it. Although it doesn't actually disintegrate, you can fly through it and into a cavern packed with goodies.

OPERATION 1 FINAL MISSION

Don't even try to attack this subterranean fortification head-on. You'll first need to disable the force-field surrounding it by moving to either side and obliterating those star-shaped defense systems and their protective gun emplacements. Then go back to the front (way back, out of range of that bad blue beam) and launch a couple of guided missiles. You have been saving your big guns for the big bruisers, haven't you?

OPERATION 2 MISSION 3

Zip past those hidden cannons in the passageway; the only thing they'll do is deplete your shields. Once in the big room, go after the large, egg-shaped tower in the middle and knock its block off for hidden power-ups. You'll undoubtedly hear lots of thunder, but unlike Mike Tyson, the bark is far worse than the bite.

As soon as you make your rescue attempt, all the other miniegg reveal their horrid cargo—mechanical spiders! There's no way out, so back off a bit to where you've got a good view of the little buggers and crank out a Smart Bomb.

OPERATION 2 MISSIONS 5 & 6

Okay, this gets complicated, so listen carefully. The force-field surrounding the hostages is powered by an energy source inside Hangar UM-1, a dock at the top level of the fortress. Unfortunately, Hangar UM-1 is, in turn, guarded by a force-field powered by a nondescript control tower located in the center of the complex, again on the top level.

Take out the control tower at the middle top (watch for chopper activity and those two gun placements nearby), then go for the now unshielded blue beam in Hangar UM-1. It will take just a few shots to destroy it, but everybody's gonna get pissed off when you do. Fortunately, you'll have learned the hit-and-run tactic against multiple enemies by now.

Once you've cleared the area, head to the second level from the bottom and rescue the hostages. Feed a missile diet to that enormous spider on the ground floor to end his day and gain a whole new shield, or ignore him and move on. Then go for the exit—it's through a cave on the bottom level.

OPERATION 2 FINAL MISSION

The daunting destroyer won't destroy you if you keep out of range. Attack from the rear so fewer guns can draw a bead on you, and buzz the beast. Dart back and forth, strafing targets as you pass, and don't slow down during your fly-bys.

That's it for this month. Next issue we'll give you the low-down on the rest of the Operations. If we have anything to say about it, EXTREME ASSAULT won't beat you that easily.



HANGAR ON At the top of this complex you'll find Hangar UM-1, just the place you need to be to get from Mission 5 to Mission 6 in Operation 2.



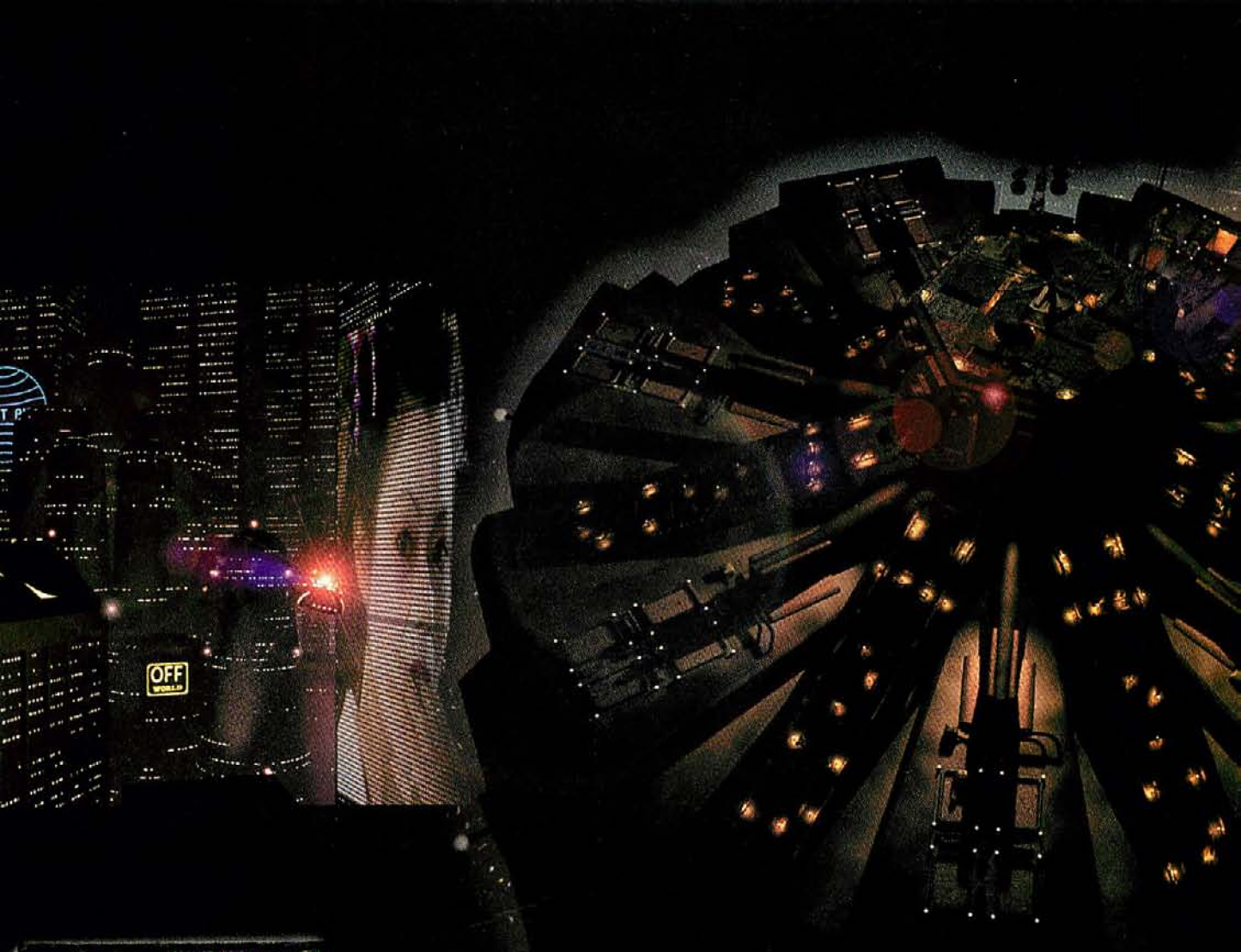
GUERRILLA TACTICS Here is an example of sneaky warfare. If you duck in and out of cover with judicious fire, this chopper will never know what hit him.

Extreme Pointers

- Shoot everything, including your own equipment and bases or seemingly benign foliage. You never know where shield or weapon upgrades may be concealed.
- Disregard the clock. It takes some time to finish each mission thoroughly, and even more to find secret spots. In the grand scheme of things, time bonuses are of little consequence.
- Running your chopper along the ground rarely causes damage, aids in stability, and sometimes offers a comfy refuge. Hey, who needs a tank?
- Most power-ups and upgrades evaporate after 25 seconds. Don't dawdle.
- You often begin missions stuck right in the heart of the action. Back off and cogitate if you feel the urge.
- When the opportunity presents itself, hammer away at targets in close proximity to one another. The resulting concussion will damage an area's worth of enemies, and that makes for a happy pilot.
- Press the Target Lock button constantly to locate hidden enemies.
- Use guerrilla tactics. Jump out from cover, take a shot, and duck back in again. When the current target is terminated, lock onto another before you fall back. It will remain locked while you're out of sight, so you can continue tracking it for a quick kill during your next foray.
- Don't go for every power-up. Some of them are designed to bait you into the line of fire.
- Many of the later missions demand a large supply of guided multiple-warhead ordnance (such as Smart Bombs and Thunderbolts), so don't drain your supply in scenarios that provide plenty of cover. You will regret it.

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CGW TIPS!

Action

WarGods

To use these cheats, just go to the properties menu within the game and click on the advanced tab. Once you're there, you should see a box marked "cheat code." Just type in one of these numbers to enable the cheat. Note that the code may not affect your current game if you are right in the middle of a match, so you may need to start over.

Free Play = On: 2509, Off: 9052. Enables free play (Unlimited Credits) in options screen.

Player 1 invincible = On: 1971, Off: 1791. Makes player 1 invincible.

Player 2 invincible = On: 1515, Off: 5151. Makes player 2 invincible.



Quick finish game = On: 4774, Off: 7447. Finishes the game after killing one CPU player.

Easy fatalities = On: 1037, Off: ¡. Pressing HP+LK triggers a fatality.

Frame Rate Display = Toggle On and Off: 5721. Allows you to view the frame rate the game is running at on your system.



Redneck Rampage

If them thar alien critters keep on mashin' y'all up, jist type in deese here cheat codes and let 'em know who's boss!

rdall = Gives everything (keys, ammo, health, and the like).

rdclip = Toggles no clipping mode on/off.

rdelvis = Gives invincibility (shows the message "Elvis Lives!").

rdguns = Gives all guns.

rdinventory = Gives all inventory.

rditems = Gives all other items.

rdkeys = Gives all keys.

rdmoonshine = Toggles XXX Moonshine mode on/off.

rdrate = Shows frame rate.

rdskill# = Changes skill (# = a number between 1 and 4).

Carmageddon

If, for some odd reason, you find vehicular manslaughter distasteful—or you simply want to practice a different form of random destruction, try the following: Go to your CARMAGEDDON directory in DOS and type **data [space bar] -german** to replace the humans with robots. Don't forget the dash after you hit the space bar.



Simulations/Space

Su-27 Flanker 1.5

Among the many enhanced features in SSI's SU-27 FLANKER 1.5 is the addition of Gouraud shading to external views. This results in a much better graphic look (at the expense of frame rate). An unpublicized feature of FLANKER 1.5 is its use of the OpenGL graphics library to accomplish this Gouraud shading. The poor frame rate and dithered look is due to the poor OpenGL implementation that ships with Windows 95—Microsoft actually did a version of a 3D API that doesn't support 3D cards.

The good news is that 3Dfx has released an Alpha version of an OpenGL library for Voodoo cards that will let you run FLANKER 1.5 in all its 3D-accelerated glory.



The bad news is that, as this was written, the Alpha release of 3Dfxgl was very preliminary and didn't support switching between 2D and 3D displays. Thus, you'll need to hit Ctrl-F9 to manually switch between 2D and 3D displays, unless you're lucky enough to have two monitors. This may be fixed by the time you read this, and even if it's not, the 3D mode is still fun for sightseeing or watching AI-flown missions.



1. If you're not running Windows 95 OSR2 (right-click on My Computer, choose Properties, and check the version number; OSR2 is 4.00.950 B), you need to obtain Microsoft's OpenGL libraries from **www.microsoft.com.**

2. Go to **www.3dfx.com** and download the 3Dfxgl 3D graphics library. Decompress the files into your SU-27 FLANKER directory—do *not* put them in your Windows directory.

3. As of this writing, the alpha version of 3Dfxgl required a Microsoft debugging library called MSVCRTD.DLL that ships with Visual C++ 4.2. If you don't have this driver installed in your Windows/System directory, find it using the search engine at **http://ftpsearch.ntnu.no**.

4. Once all these files are in place, launch SU-27 FLANKER 1.5 and make sure that shaded graphics are enabled. Now start a mission. When shifting to the external view, you should see silky-smooth, Gouraud-shaded graphics. Hit Ctrl-F9 to swap back to the standard display when you re-enter the cockpit.

Adventure

Betrayal at Antara

Never enter a battle unless everyone is well rested. This is of the utmost importance. Travel with lots of food so everyone can rest as needed. Herbal packs accelerate healing, so use them when you are short of food. Never save a game if someone is so injured that his portrait is red. Healing such a condition takes a long time and requires huge quantities of food. Go back to the automatic saved game before the combat that resulted in the injuries and try again.

Try to kill every opponent. Computer opponents tend to run away when they are injured, so if you want to collect their loot, focus on killing one enemy at a time. Use Aren's *Unseeing Eye* spell to slow enemies and lower their combat abilities. Before Aren learns this spell, use him for melee combat; he's not too bad with his staff.

If you're up against the wall, just try to survive. Distribute your forces and try to injure all opponents, concentrating first on your most dangerous enemies. Again, first have Aren cast *Unseeing Eye* to weaken enemies, and follow up with damage spells.

Always take a seriously injured party member out of the fray if you cannot heal them during combat. Don't be afraid to retreat if things get too bad. It's better to rest and return to fight again.



Examine the bodies of fallen foes and pick up better weapons and armor whenever possible. You can then pick up the rest to sell. Especially in the first chapters (when money is hard to come by), return to bodies, strip them, and sell everything you can.



For difficult battles, use (rather than sell) the potions you find in order to enhance your weapons, armor, and fighting skills. Buy Senwater and divide it among your party members. Use it to heal poisoned characters and to heal characters during combat. Senwater becomes especially valuable once Aren can cast many combat spells, as he can heal himself and then continue casting spells.



Keep your armor and weapons in good condition. Buy whetstones and armorer's hammers and use the whetstones after every combat, if possible. Use the armorer's hammers after every few combats. From chapter four on, you can get your armor and weapons blessed at a Temple of Kor.

Finally, visit everywhere, fight every battle, and help whomever you can. The more you do, the more your skills will improve. — *Petra Schlunk*

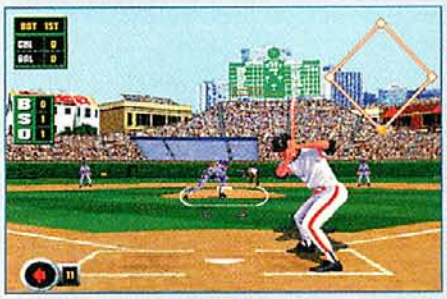


CGW TIPS!

Sports

Grand Slam

Computer-controlled batters do a poor job of protecting the plate with a two-strike count. So once you're ahead of a hitter, it's fairly easy to nibble the corners with pitches and strike him out. Curveballs work particularly well, and even a change-up is more effective than it should be. — *Dennis McCauley*

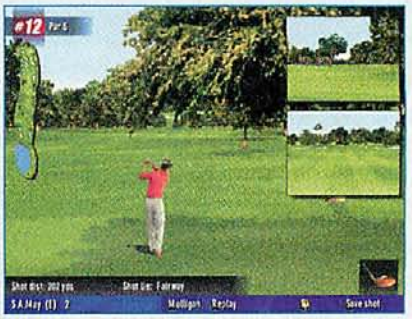


PGA Tour Pro

The more power behind your swing, the more difficult it is to control. The severity of your draws or fades substantially increases the harder you hit the ball — especially if you overswing. Golf is a game of strategic positioning, and it's better to drive short than waste shots regaining ground.

Use the hole walk-through feature to spot potential danger areas, as well as the best way out of difficult lies.

Computer caddies typically choose the safest club, not necessarily the best club for each particular shot. For example, when you hit out of a distant sand trap or heavy rough, the caddie is mainly concerned with getting you back on the fairway. Instead of a wedge, use a medium iron in these types of situations for greater distance with a reasonable degree of safety.





Switch to the Pro skill level when you are driving the ball. Although this makes the shot more difficult to control, you will be rewarded with a much longer drive. You can then change back to Novice or Amateur level as you approach the green.

When using backspin on an approach to the green, aim slightly short of the flag. Backspin kicks in on the ball's second bounce. — *Scott May*

Tennis Elbow

The most difficult thing to master in this game is how to play the net. To hone your serve-and-volley game, do what John McEnroe used to do: Skip practice and play lots of doubles! Against medium skilled and better opponents, you'll have to pick shots off your shoelaces constantly, and you'll get a lot of practice on your overhead smash — lobs are the most common shot for AI doubles teams, especially on slower surfaces.

— *Terry Coleman*



Puzzles/Classics

Smart Games: Stratajams

Warehouse

Here you often see an obvious first move — a ball right next to a receptacle, for instance. Be wary: These "gimmes" are often traps that land you in no-win situations if you fall for them. Think before making your first move.

It's easy to forget that you can push a ball out of a receptacle as well as in, and also over the "trigger" squares that cause walls to spring up. Just because a square has something in it, it doesn't mean a ball can't be in it, too.

Sliding Tiles

These are really just highly constrained jigsaw puzzles and are susceptible to the same strategies. If you aren't sure which pieces belong next to one another, start by grouping all pieces of the same color, or by moving all pieces that seem to be part of the same section of the picture so that they are near each other.



Marble Jump

In puzzles containing one marble that you hope to leave in a target location, focus on moving it there early. There are rarely enough pieces in the endgame to move a marble all the way across the board.

Cash Crop

One approach to path optimization is simply to select the higher-paying branch at each fork. If both (or all three) branches pay the same amount, look at the available second moves (there are 12, at most) and select the first move on the basis of which second move will pay the highest.

Traffic

If you see that one direction has a lot more cars scheduled than the other, set the

Strategy/Wargames

Wooden Ships & Iron Men

There's an inside joke that gives you a nice cheat for Avalon Hill's *CGW* Wargame of the Year finalist. Go to the WSIM DOS prompt and type the programmer's last name: **GERCKEN**.

You'll then be able to completely blow away enemy vessels with just one broadside.



Dragon Dice

While the variety of dice you select affects gameplay in Dragon Dice, some basic stratagems work no matter how your armies are comprised. Use them against the AI and the land of Esfah will be yours.

Hit hard and hit early. Size up your competition and smack the most threatening force as hard as you can, preferably with a missile or magic attack so they can't retaliate.

Kill enemy mages. While normal troops might do more damage, only wizards can revive dead armies. With spellcasters out of the way, you can safely whittle away enemy forces as melee troops try in vain to raise the dead.

Throw some magic troops into your reserve area on your first retreat. Some beefy wizard-types removed from the battlefield guarantee your ability to resurrect your armies when needed, staving off elimination.

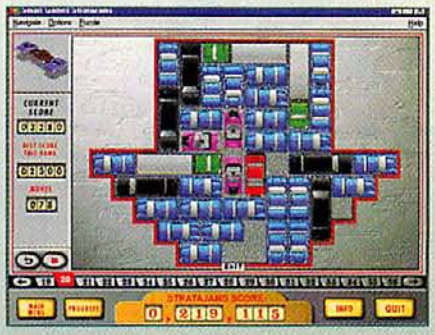
Let others do your dirty work for you. When playing against multiple computer-controlled armies, pool your troops in one locale and let the AI armies kill each other off. Maneuver this home terrain to its eighth face, fire off spells and missiles, then swoop in and take over another terrain when defenders are at their weakest.

Don't be afraid to back out of captured terrain. If your armies are losing badly, retreat to your reserves and heal back to full strength, since the AI will rarely take over two terrain sets in the meantime.

Use dragons to create a defense perimeter. Summoning dragons to unoccupied terrain will keep computer units from entering. Use this to create a buffer zone between you and hostile missile units.

Capture the Tower terrain if you have lots of missile units or spellcasters. Missile units can exploit the Tower to fire upon any terrain from a safe distance. Magic troops get no immediate benefit from the Tower, but holding it prevents enemies from using it to kill your vulnerable mages from afar. Drop a dragon into adjacent terrain to stop close missile attacks and wipe out your foes.

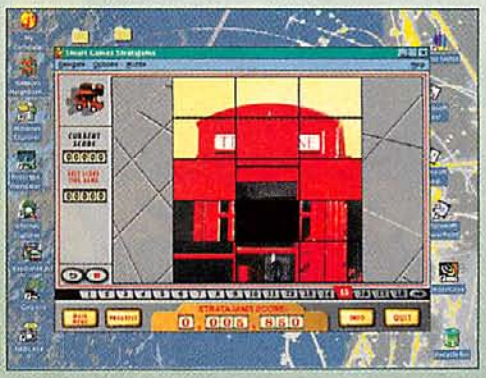




lights so that direction is green at the start, and make the intervals long, short, and long. For instance, if the number of north-south cars is 12 and the number of east-west cars is only 6, make sure intervals 1 and 3 permit north-south traffic, and make them at least twice the length of interval 2. Best of all, if you can clear out all the east-west traffic in a single interval, do so, and then set the third interval to its maximum duration. You'll never have to return to the direction that's cleared out and the round will end before the maximum duration expires, as soon as the last car leaves the screen.

General Tips

Available axes of motion are not always obvious. Those of us who remember the wooden peg jumping games that didn't permit diagonal moves need to be reminded that diagonal jumps are acceptable on most levels of Marble Jump. Similarly, the cars in Car Jam can be rotated 90 degrees. And while you can't push two balls at once in Warehouse, if you manage to line up three balls, you can push them (go figure). —Charles Ardai



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- 02. ☐ Graduated High School
- 03. ☐ Some College or Technical school
- 04. ☐ Graduated College
- 05. ☐ Post Graduate school

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- 02. ☐ MacIntosh
- 03. ☐ Amiga
- 04. ☐ Dedicated game machine
- 05. ☐ None

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- 02. ☐ Pentium (586)
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- 04. ☐ 386
- 05. ☐ 286

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- 02. ☐ Once every two to three weeks
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255	Acclaim	NFL Quarterback Club	376-377
104	Acclaim	Turok Dinosaur Hunter	231
291	Accolade	Deadlock II	2-3
290	Accolade	Jack Nicholas 5	368-369
298	Accolade	Test Drive 4	C5-C7
195	ACT Laboratory Ltd	Force RS	100
148	Activision	Dark Reign	152-153
143	Activision	Heavy Gear	40-41
189	Activision	Nightmare Creatures	169-171
140	Activision	Quake II	12-13
142	Activision	Zork Grand Inquisitor	158-159
106	ATI Technologies	XPERT @ Play	81
167	Avalon Hill Game Company	Defiance	28-29
82	Bazooka(SAS)	Drowned God	26
111	Berkeley Systems	You Don't Know Jack Vol. III	33
373	Bethesda Softworks	Battle Spire	228-229
372	Bethesda Softworks	X-Car	387
266	Blizzard Entertainment	Star Craft	4-5
175	Blue Byte Software	Extreme Assault	333
176	Blue Byte Software	Incubation	317
264	Bungie Software	Myth	64-65
61	CH Products	Jane's Combat Stick	261
68	Chips & Bits	www.cdmag.com/chips.html	435-437
*	Computer Express	M.O. Products	438-439
70	Creative Labs, Inc.	Speakers	219
132	Cryo Interactive Entertainment	Dreams	330
253	CyberWarrior	Rubies of Eventide	156
113	Cyclone Studios	Uprising	86-87
190	Diamond Multimedia Systems, Inc	Monster 3D/Diamond 3D Audio	180
63	Discovery Communications, Inc	Byzantine	209
64	Discovery Communications, Inc	Evolution	211
191	Earth Link	The Arena	236
275	Eidos	Conquest Earth	52-53
115	Eidos	Eidos Interactive	55
69	Eidos	Flight Unlimited 2	50-51
277	Eidos	Joint Strike Fighter	48-49
278	Eidos	Tomb Raider 2	54
183	Electronic Arts	Galapagos	176-177
184	Electronic Arts	KKND	191
181	Electronic Arts	NHL '98	340-341
375	Empire Interactive	Flying Corps Gold	107
62	Empire Interactive	The Golf Pro	380
299	Empire Interactive	timeshock! Pro Pinball	267
257	Falcon - Northwest	Falcon MACH V	265
60	Fox Interactive	Simpson's Virtual Springfield	188
105	Gateway 2000	Destination Big Screen PC/TV	273-276
65	Graphic Simulations Corporation	Korea	220
282	GT Interactive Software	Blood	178
281	GT Interactive Software	Mage Slayer	30-31
180	GT Interactive Software	Odd World	C2-C4,1
368	GT Interactive Software	Total Annihilation	194-195
280	GT Interactive Software	YoungBlood	226-227
*	Harman International	November Image	262-263
270	Headland	Net War	246-247
83	Interactive Magic	Seven Kingdoms	198
72	Intergraph Computer Systems	Intense 3D	6-7
74	Intergraph Computer Systems	Intergraph PCs	270-271
258	Interplay Productions, Inc	Avalanche of Excitement	113-121
76	Interplay Productions, Inc	Baldur's Gate	110-111
161	Interplay Productions, Inc	Caesars/Redneck	132-133
67	Interplay Productions, Inc	Carmageddon	136-137
79	Interplay Productions, Inc	Descent to Under Mountain	126-127
262	Interplay Productions, Inc	Die by the Sword	138-139
*	Interplay Productions, Inc	Interplay Opening	122-123
260	Interplay Productions, Inc	Of Light and Darkness	128-131
59	Interplay Productions, Inc	Starfleet Academy	134-135
77	Interplay Productions, Inc	Virtual Pool 2	382
269	Interplay Productions, Inc	VR Baseball	144
265	Interplay Productions, Inc	VR Football	142-143
*	Interplay Productions, Inc	VR Sports	140-141
263	Interplay Productions, Inc	Vulcan Fury	124-125
154	ISM, Inc	Virtual Surgeon: Open Heart	291
147	The Laral Group	Nintendo Peripherals	69
117	LucasArts Entertainment Company	Curse of Monkey Island	36-37
122	LucasArts Entertainment Company	Jedi Knight	302-305
119	LucasArts Entertainment Company	"The Archives, Volume III"	256
146	Magix Entertainment	Magix Music Maker	70

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R.S.#	COMPANY	PRODUCT	PAGE
246	Matrox Graphics, Inc	Matrox m3D	259
102	MEDIA ON	Gaming Systems	440-441
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100	Micron Electronics, Inc	Millennia	250-251
196	MicroProse	7th Legion	397
158	MicroProse	Dark Earth	252
157	MicroProse	Falcon 4.0	146-147
152	MicroProse	Magic: The Gathering	174
99	MicroProse	Worms 2	292
71	MicroProse	X-COM:Apocalypse	329
*	Microsoft	Age of Empires	14-15
*	Microsoft	Close Combat	72-73
*	Microsoft	Flight Simulator 98	184-185
*	Microsoft	Force Feedback	89
*	Microsoft	Sidewinder Gamepad	255
*	Microsoft	Sidewinder/Precision Pro	239
150	Mindscape	ChessMaster	398-399
293	Monolith Productions	Claw	268
108	Novalogic	Armored Fist 2	391
109	Novalogic	F-22 Raptor	71
114	ORIGIN Systems, Inc	Dungeon Keeper	94-95
*	ORIGIN Systems, Inc	Longbow 2	102-103
261	ORIGIN Systems, Inc	Nuclear Strike	309-311
*	ORIGIN Systems, Inc	Wing Commander Prophecy	C8
*	PC Computing	Super Heroes	414
284	Psygnosis	G Police	78-79
169	Quarterdeck Corp	Qemm 97	334
256	QuickShot Technology, Inc	Second Force/3D Striker	269
153	Red Orb Entertainment	Take No Prisoners	108-109
160	Red Storm Entertainment	Politica	167
159	Saitek	Saitek X36	272
*	Sega Entertainment	Daytona	352-353
*	Sega Entertainment	Manx tt	351
*	Sega Entertainment	NBA Live '98	354-355
271	Sega Soft	Flesh Feast	57-59
267	Sega Soft	Heat	"35, 162"
366	Sierra On-Line	Civil War: Generals	206
360	Sierra On-Line	Football '98	366-367
156	Sierra On-Line	Half Life	24-25
*	Sierra On-Line	Lords of Magic	201-203
364	Sierra On-Line	Lords of Magic	201-203
363	Sierra On-Line	Nascar 2	338-339
369	Sierra On-Line	Outpost II	400-401
359	Sierra On-Line	ProPilot	326-327
361	Sierra On-Line	Red Barron 2	82-83
371	Sierra On-Line	Skiing	362-363
362	Sierra On-Line	SODA	346-347
357	Sierra On-Line	SWAT 2	164-165
155	Sierra On-Line	Trophy Rivers	212-213
251	Simon & Schuster	Starship Titanic	283,285"
126	Sir-Tech	Armed & Delirious	393
128	Sir-Tech	Excalibur	60
124	Sir-Tech	Virus	193
87	Sony Interactive Studios America	Jet Moto	301
101	Sony Interactive Studios America	Tanurus	432-433
86	Sony Interactive Studios America	Twisted Metal 2	299
295	SouthPeak Interactive	Drachenzor	8-9
297	SouthPeak Interactive	Temujin	16-17
192	Stardock Systems	Entrepreneur	319
234	Strategic Simulations, Inc	Dark Colony	74-75
232	Strategic Simulations, Inc	Final Liberation	385
239	Strategic Simulations, Inc	Imperialism	322-323
236	Strategic Simulations, Inc	Panzer General II	288-289
233	Strategic Simulations, Inc	Steel Panthers 3	388
240	Strategic Simulations, Inc	Warwind II	405
254	Take 2 Interactive Software	Black Dahlia	280-281
107	Take 2 Interactive Software	JETFIGHTER III: Platinum Pack	242
243	Talonsoft	East Front	90-91
127	THQ	Pax Imperia	183
161	ThunderSeat Technologies	ThunderSeat	266
292	UBI Soft, Inc	Subculture	294-295
151	Uncle John's Attic	Uncle John's Attic	434
*	Virgin Interactive Entertainment	Blade Runner	421-423
*	Virgin Interactive Entertainment	Broken Sword	105
*	Virgin Interactive Entertainment	Lands of Lore: Guardians of Destiny	62-63
*	Virgin Interactive Entertainment	Resident Evil	20-21
*	Virgin Interactive Entertainment	Sabre Ace	39
*	Virgin Interactive Entertainment	Tone Rebellion	154-155
*	Wal-Mart	Star Wars Monopoly	47
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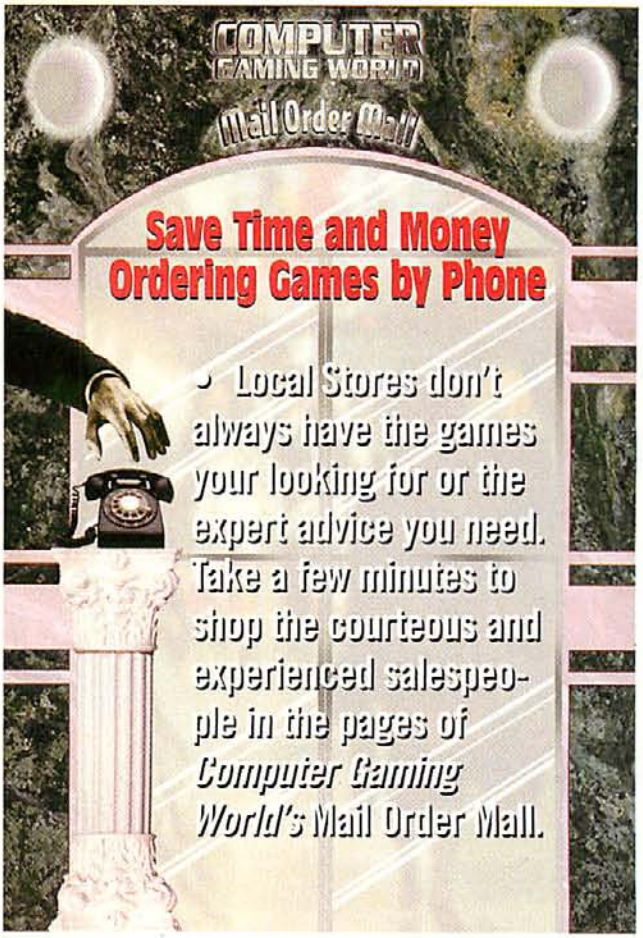
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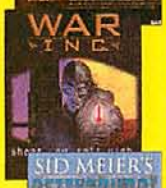
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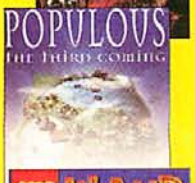
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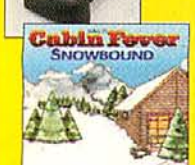
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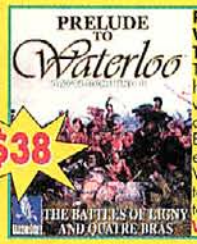
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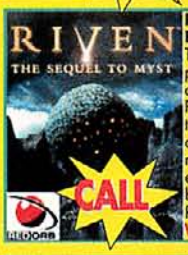
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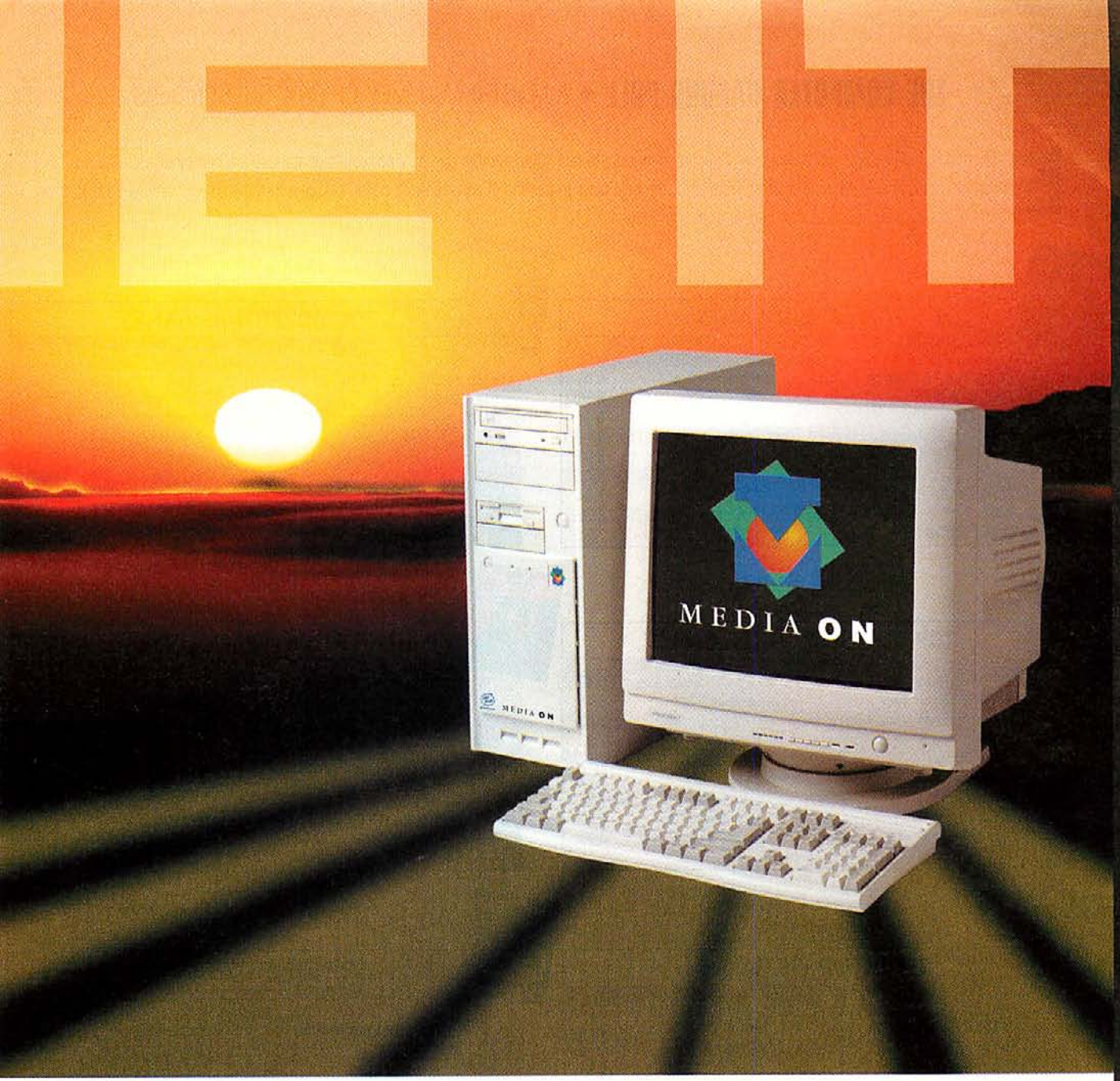
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THE COMPUTER GAMING POLL • A MONTHLY SURVEY OF *CGW* SUBSCRIBERS

Each month, 2,000 *CGW* subscribers are selected at random to rate 100 computer games. The results of that poll are combined with the results of previous months to yield a cumulative average for the best plays in gaming. If you receive a ballot, please return it with your ratings so that other gamers and game publishers can benefit from your feedback.



TOP ACTION GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Quake Pack 2: Dissolution of Eternity	Rogue/id	9.08
2	Quake Pack 1: Scourge of Armagon	Ritual/id	9.06
3	Tomb Raider	Eidos	8.36
4	Duke Nukem 3D	Apogee/3D Realms	8.34
5	Crusader: No Remorse	EA/Origin	8.13
6	The Need for Speed SE	EA	8.09
7	Quake	id Software	8.01
8	Crusader: No Regret	EA/Origin	7.84
9	MDK	Playmates/Shiny	7.72
10	Interstate '76	Activision	7.71



TOP ADVENTURE GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Gabriel Knight 2	Sierra	8.26
2	Pandora Directive	Access	8.25
3	Rama	Sierra	7.90
4	Realms of the Haunting	Interplay	7.85
5	The Neverhood	Dreamworks	7.64
6	Spycraft	Activision	7.55
7	Full Throttle	LucasArts	7.50
8	Circle of Blood	Virgin	7.42
9	Leisure Suit Larry 7	Sierra	7.38
10	Last Express	Broderbund	7.29



TOP CLASSIC/PUZZLE GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	You Don't Know Jack II	Berkeley Systems	8.40
2	You Don't Know Jack	Berkeley Systems	8.18
3	You Don't Know Jack Sports	Berkeley Systems	8.03
4	You Don't Know Jack Movies	Berkeley Systems	7.97
5	Power Chess	Sierra	7.27
6	Incredible Toons	Sierra	7.21
7	Mind Grind	Microforum	7.00
8	Monopoly	Virgin/Westwood	6.86
9	Baku Baku	Sega	5.94
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TOP SIMULATION/SPACE COMBAT GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Wing Commander IV	EA/Origin	8.39
2	MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries	Activision	8.15
3	MechWarrior 2	Activision	8.14
4	AH-64 Longbow	EA/Origin	8.10
5	U.S. Marine Fighters	EA	7.88
6	Silent Hunter	SSI	7.87
7	EF2000	Ocean	7.66
8	X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter	LucasArts	7.61
9	U.S. Navy Fighters	EA	7.57
10	Advanced Tactical Fighter	EA	7.48



TOP SPORTS GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Links LS	Access	8.67
2	NASCAR Racing 2	Sierra	8.28
3	NHL 97	EA Sports	8.15
4	NBA Live 97	EA Sports	8.14
5	Grand Prix 2	MicroProse	8.09
6	Jack Nicklaus 4	Accolade	7.81
7	NASCAR Racing	Sierra	7.60
8	Tripleplay 97	EA Sports	7.56
9	NHL Hockey 96	EA Sports	7.51
10	FPS Football Pro '97	Sierra	7.47



TOP STRATEGY GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Heroes II: Price of Loyalty	New World Computing	9.02
2	WarCraft II Expansion Disk	Blizzard	8.88
3	WarCraft II	Blizzard	8.80
4	Red Alert	Virgin/Westwood	8.78
5	Heroes II	New World Computing	8.74
6	Civilization II	MicroProse	8.73
7	Red Alert: Counterstrike	Virgin/Westwood	8.42
8	C&C: Covert Operations	Virgin/Westwood	8.30
9	Command & Conquer	Virgin/Westwood	8.29
10	Civilization II: Scenarios	MicroProse	8.21



TOP ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Diablo	Blizzard	8.79
2	Daggerfall	Bethesda	7.47
3	Anvil of Dawn	New World Computing	7.16
4	Albion	Blue Byte	6.18
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TOP WARGAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Steel Panthers II Campaign Disk	SSI	9.06
2	Steel Panthers Campaign Disk	SSI	8.71
3	Steel Panthers II	SSI	8.45
4	Steel Panthers	SSI	8.41
5	Battleground: Shiloh	TalonSoft	8.12
6	Tigers on the Prowl II	HPS	7.98
7	Battleground: Antietam	TalonSoft	7.96
8	Battleground: Waterloo	TalonSoft	7.73
9	Battleground: Gettysburg	TalonSoft	7.53
10	Battleground: Napoleon in Russia	TalonSoft	7.50

	GAME	COMPANY	TYPE	SCORE
★1	Quake Pack 2: Dissolution of Eternity	Rogue/id	AC	9.08
2	Quake Pack 1: Scourge of Armagon	Ritual/id	AC	9.06
★	Steel Panthers II Campaign Disk	SSI	WG	9.06
★4	Heroes II: Price of Loyalty	New World Computing	ST	9.02
5	WarCraft II Expansion Disk	Blizzard	ST	8.88
6	WarCraft II	Blizzard	ST	8.80
★7	Diablo	Blizzard	RP	8.79
8	Red Alert	Virgin/Westwood	ST	8.78
9	Heroes II	New World Computing	ST	8.74
10	Civilization II	MicroProse	ST	8.73
11	Steel Panthers Campaign Disk	SSI	WG	8.71
★12	Links LS	Access	SP	8.67
13	Steel Panthers II	SSI	WG	8.45
14	Red Alert: Counterstrike	Virgin/Westwood	ST	8.42
15	Steel Panthers	SSI	WG	8.41
★16	You Don't Know Jack II	Berkeley Systems	CP	8.40
★17	Wing Commander IV	EA/Origin	SI	8.39
18	Tomb Raider	Eidos	AC	8.36
19	Duke Nukem 3D	Apogee/3D Realms	AC	8.34
20	C&C: Covert Operations	Virgin/Westwood	ST	8.30
21	Command & Conquer	Virgin/Westwood	ST	8.29
22	NASCAR Racing 2	Sierra	SP	8.28
★23	Gabriel Knight 2	Sierra	AD	8.26
24	Pandora Directive	Access	AD	8.25
25	Civilization II: Scenarios	MicroProse	ST	8.21
26	You Don't Know Jack	Berkeley Systems	CP	8.18
27	MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries	Activision	SI	8.15
	NHL 97	EA Sports	SP	8.15
29	MechWarrior 2	Activision	SI	8.14
	NBA Live 97	EA Sports	SP	8.14
31	Crusader: No Remorse	EA/Origin	AC	8.13
32	Battleground: Shiloh	TalonSoft	WG	8.12
33	AH-64 Longbow	EA/Origin	SI	8.10
34	Grand Prix 2	MicroProse	SP	8.09
	The Need for Speed SE	EA	AC	8.09
36	You Don't Know Jack Sports	Berkeley Systems	CP	8.03
37	Quake	id Software	AC	8.01
38	Tigers on the Prowl II	HPS	WG	7.98
39	You Don't Know Jack Movies	Berkeley Systems	CP	7.97
40	Battleground: Antietam	TalonSoft	WG	7.96
41	Rama	Sierra	AD	7.90
42	Heroes of Might & Magic	New World Computing	ST	7.89
43	U.S. Marine Fighters	EA	SI	7.88
44	Silent Hunter	SSI	SI	7.87
45	Realms of the Haunting	Interplay	AD	7.85
46	Crusader: No Regret	EA/Origin	AC	7.84
47	Jack Nicklaus 4	Accolade	SP	7.81
48	Battleground: Waterloo	TalonSoft	WG	7.73
49	MDK	Playmates/Shiny	AC	7.72
50	Interstate '76	Activision	AC	7.71

	GAME	COMPANY	TYPE	SCORE
51	EF2000	Ocean	SI	7.66
52	The Neverhood	Dreamworks	AD	7.64
53	X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter	LucasArts	SI	7.61
54	Jagged Alliance: Deadly Games	Sir-Tech	ST	7.60
	NASCAR Racing	Sierra	SP	7.60
56	U.S. Navy Fighters	EA	SI	7.57
57	Lords of the Realm II	Sierra	ST	7.56
	Tripleplay 97	EA Sports	SP	7.56
59	Spycraft	Activision	AD	7.55
60	Battleground: Gettysburg	TalonSoft	WG	7.53
61	NHL Hockey 96	EA Sports	SP	7.51
62	Battleground: Napoleon in Russia	TalonSoft	WG	7.50
	Full Throttle	LucasArts	AD	7.50
64	The Need for Speed	EA	AC	7.49
65	Advanced Tactical Fighters	EA	SI	7.48
66	Daggerfall	Bethesda	RP	7.47
	Fantasy General	SSI	ST	7.47
	FPS Football Pro '97	Sierra	SP	7.47
69	NBA Live 96	EA Sports	SP	7.45
70	FPS Football Pro '96	Sierra	SP	7.44
71	Circle of Blood	Virgin	AD	7.42
72	CivNet	MicroProse	ST	7.41
73	Comanche 3	NovaLogic	SI	7.40
	Flying Corps	Empire	SI	7.40
	PGA Tour Golf 486	EA Sports	SP	7.40
76	Leisure Suit Larry 7	Sierra	AD	7.38
	Warbirds	ICI	SI	7.38
78	Privateer 2	EA/Origin	SI	7.36
	Robert E. Lee: Civil War General	Sierra	WG	7.36
80	Tony LaRussa 3 '96	Stormfront Studios	SP	7.35
81	Theme Hospital	EA/Bullfrog	ST	7.33
82	F-22 Lightning	NovaLogic	SI	7.32
83	FIFA 97	EA Sports	SP	7.30
84	Last Express	Broderbund	AD	7.29
85	Lighthouse	Sierra	AD	7.28
86	Power Chess	Sierra	CP	7.27
87	M.A.X.	Interplay	ST	7.25
88	Incredible Toons	Sierra	CP	7.21
	Magic the Gathering	MicroProse	ST	7.21
	Pro Pinball	Empire	AC	7.21
	System Shock	EA/Origin	AC	7.21
	Zork Nemesis	Activision	AD	7.21
93	Descent II	Interplay	AC	7.19
	Road Rash	EA	AC	7.19
95	Virtual Pool	Interplay	SP	7.17
96	Anvil of Dawn	New World Computing	RP	7.16
97	Jetfighter III	Mission Studios	SI	7.14
	Syndicate Wars	EA/Bullfrog	AC	7.14
99	Missionforce Cyberstorm	Sierra	ST	7.13
100	Age of Rifles Campaign Disk	SSI	WG	7.11

Games on unnumbered lines are tied with game on line above. ★ = Top game of type. Red = New Game, AD = Adventure, RP = Role-Playing, SI = Simulation/Space Combat, ST = Strategy, WG = Wargame, AC = Action, SP = Sports, CP = Classic/Puzzle. Games are retired after two years and become eligible for the Hall of Fame.

Welcome to the Cooperstown of Computer Games. Here you'll find, raised upon pedestals, the games that broke the records, established the benchmarks, and held gamers in delighted trances for hours untold.

HIGHLIGHTS

The Secret of Monkey Island

LucasArts, 1990



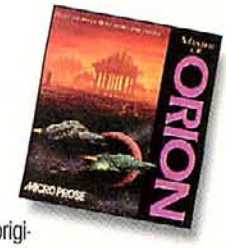
When *CGW* selected the funniest games of all time (issue #148), THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND—a milestone in the long, successful line of LucasArts graphic adventures—finished near the top of the list, despite its age. Humor abounds everywhere in MONKEY ISLAND, from the text and animation to the plotline. Even the music is comical.

Drop the "s" from swordplay, for example, and you have the essence of the delightful swordfighting sequences, in which you parry with words and insults rather than with your reflexes. Also, who could ever forget the controversial instruction to insert Disk Number 256 (too many people believed that there really was such a disk), and the hilarious animation for the grog machine sequence?

More importantly, the game's story and conclusion made its anti sexist points without diluting the tongue-in-cheek nature of the game. Finally, the gameplay was perfect. Designer Ron Gilbert had a marvelous way of letting you know what had to be accomplished in order to move to the next story segment and he prodded you along with clues that function as cues. In a very real sense, the MONKEY ISLAND series marked the coming of age of LucasArts' SCUMM system (the company's software tools for graphic adventures). While you wait for the third installment of Guy Threepwood and the infamous pirate LeChuck (which is due this winter), try going back to the original—these adversaries have aged remarkably well.

Master of Orion

MicroProse 1993



At first glance, this game from an unknown company in Texas seemed like just another space game. After all, the recipe for MASTER OF ORION is hardly original: It's a standard mix of humans and weird alien starfaring races with lots of combat, trade, diplomacy, and quickly changing technology (which you use to conquer a cold, uncaring universe). It didn't help that the first release (like so many from MicroProse in recent years) required a patch, or that Steve Barcia's design lacked both high-res graphics and an intuitive interface. But Simtex' brainchild eventually became one of the most admired strategy games in many years.

MOO, as it was affectionately dubbed, had an edge over the competition in that the aliens were quirky and interesting, and each required radically different playing styles. MOO also featured a remarkable diplomatic AI that, although copied in several designs since, has yet to be surpassed. The combination of technological advances, the mysteries of galactic exploration, and the tactics of space and planetary combat surpass even SSG's REACH FOR THE STARS. The intricacies of spaceship design alone could keep you busy until the next generation of aliens hatch from Antares.

The original MOO recalls a time when designers crafted games that *they* wanted to play, and for that reason alone, MOO is essential for any gamer even remotely interested in exploring or conquering the universe.

Inductees Prior To 1989

- **BATTLE CHESS** (Interplay Productions, 1988)
- **CHESSMASTER** (The Software Toolworks, 1986)
- **DUNGEON MASTER** (FTL SOFTWARE, 1987)
- **EARL WEAVER BASEBALL** (Electronic Arts, 1986)
- **EMPIRE** (Interstel, 1978)
- **F-19 STEALTH FIGHTER** (MicroProse, 1988)
- **GETTYSBURG: THE TURNING POINT** (SSI, 1986)
- **KAMPFGRUPPE** (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
- **MECH BRIGADE** (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
- **MIGHT & MAGIC** (New World Computing, 1986)
- **M.U.L.E.** (Electronic Arts, 1983)
- **SID MEIER'S PIRATES!** (MicroProse, 1987)
- **SIMCITY** (Maxis, 1987)
- **STARFLIGHT** (Electronic Arts, 1986)
- **THE BARD'S TALE** (Electronic Arts, 1985)
- **ULTIMA III** (Origin Systems, 1983)
- **ULTIMA IV** (Origin Systems, 1985)
- **WAR IN RUSSIA** (Strategic Simulations, 1984)
- **WASTELAND** (Interplay Productions, 1986)
- **WIZARDRY** (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)
- **ZORK** (Infocom, 1981)

Modern Inductees

- **ALONE IN THE DARK** (I-Motion, 1992)
- **BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR** (Dynamix, 1993)
- **DAY OF THE TENTACLE** (LucasArts, 1993)
- **DOOM** (id Software, 1993)
- **FALCON 3.0** (Spectrum HoloByte, 1991)
- **FRONT PAGE SPORTS FOOTBALL PRO** (Dynamix, 1993)
- **GUNSHIP** (MicroProse, 1989)
- **HARPOON** (Three-Sixty Pacific, 1989)
- **KING'S QUEST V** (Sierra On-Line, 1990)
- **LEMMINGS** (Psygnosis, 1991)
- **LINKS 386 PRO** (Access Software, 1992)
- **M-1 TANK PLATOON** (MicroProse, 1989)
- **MASTER OF MAGIC** (MicroProse, 1994)
- **MASTER OF ORION** (MicroProse, 1993)
- **PANZER GENERAL** (SSI, 1994)
- **RED BARON** (Dynamix, 1990)
- **SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION** (MicroProse, 1991)
- **SID MEIER'S RAILROAD TYCOON** (MicroProse, 1990)
- **THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND** (LucasArts, 1990)
- **THEIR FINEST HOUR** (LucasArts, 1989)
- **TIE FIGHTER** (LucasArts, 1994)
- **ULTIMA VI** (Origin Systems, 1990)
- **ULTIMA UNDERWORLD** (Origin Systems, 1992)
- **WING COMMANDER I, II, & III** (Origin Systems, 1990-91)
- **WOLFENSTEIN 3-D** (id Software, 1992)
- **X-COM** (MicroProse, 1994)

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NEXT MONTH

450+ Holiday Packed Pages

Coming This December In CGW

You've been a good gamer all year, and now it's time for your reward. Next month, we'll bring you the biggest issue of the year, packed with an unbelievable array of cool games and gaming hardware for your holiday happiness. The December CGW will be so fat that Santa will have to strap JATO rockets to his reindeer to get you your copy on time (service may vary in the Aleutian Islands, Micronesia, and the upper Congo River area). So now might be a good time to reinforce the roof, upgrade that hard-drive, and as always, keep your hands and arms away from behind the reindeer while the sleigh is in motion.



Holiday Hot 100

Forty pages of **great** games and goodies for the holidays. We'll show you the best titles in every category that are supposed to be out by year's end, plus hardware, family entertainment, stocking stuffers, and shopping tips for non-gamers. This is the big one you won't want to miss!

ULTIMATE GAME MACHINE PART I

The original and best Ultimate Game Machine series in *any* magazine returns next month, with an in-depth look at a dozen systems from major manufacturers. We'll test and rate machines from Micron, Compaq, Dell, Falcon Northwest, Gateway, Sony, Intergraph, and more to see who can run real games real fast. Check it out!



SNEAK PREVIEWS!

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Sin
Populous III
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and more!

▶▶▶ON SALE THE FIRST WEEK OF NOVEMBER

MARTIN CIRULIS



What's the Deal with...Being Politically Incorrect?

Well, the time has rolled around again. Another company is scared that its game is going to make about as much of a splash as a turd thrown into the Atlantic, so it decides some controversy will take the place of talent...and the mainstream press falls for it hook, line, and sinker.

Yes, folks, we're looking at another NIGHT TRAP Christmas, and this year's lovely contestant is a pretty average number called POSTAL, which comes to us from a bunch of cynical cephalopods known as Running With Scissors Games. (And you know they are bad boys just from the name of their company! What would their mothers say?) Gamewise, there's nothing shocking about this one, at least not in the demo—a guy running around shooting up things that may or may not be zombies in traditional arcade style. Nothing in the package is really going to take the world by storm, except for a subtle little maneuver on the company's part to link their game with real-life incidents—the kind we see every so often on the news, when sad, disturbed individuals go berserk and murder or maim their coworkers. And guess what? It's working like a charm.

All they had to do was put a catalog of real-life shooting sprees on their Web site, and suddenly they're the Bad Boys of Computer Gaming, with the mainstream press giving them all the publicity they can handle. And for every attack on their blindly repugnant behavior, their defense will be the clichéd, "Hey, man, you're just being Politically Correct! We're just saying what we think is funny. We're rebels, man!"

> **"Gee, why doesn't the Scissors bunch come out with *Genocide: The Home Game*?"**

What utter and complete *crap*!

Our hobby is already filled with episodes of actually spontaneous "incorrectness," which range from mildly amusing to annoying, depending on how close to your maturity level they come. I mean, the guys over at 3D Realms spend all day together coding, debugging, eating Chinese food, giggling about strippers, and throwing fortune cookies at each other. Some of it's going to leak into their work! And if English sitcoms are to be believed, who can blame Bullfrog for thinking that it wasn't that unusual for someone to be cheered up by a spanking?

But this POSTAL business is nothing as charming and socially incompetent as exploding dancers. This is manipulative, dark, and cynical in the way it tries to work the numbers, not only of the gaming crowd but of the public in general. It has all the spontaneity and creativity of walking into a school yard and picking out the kid who's small enough for you to safely push down in the mud, just so all your friends will think you are tough.

Gee, why doesn't the Scissors bunch come out with *Genocide: The Home Game*, *Kickboxing the Blind* or *Custer's Rapin' Rampage*? (Those of us with long arcade memories might wince over that last one.) You want to know why? Because the groups who suffered such tragedies in real life are too big and powerful to be laughed at, and Scissors would have its little ass kicked all over the place. No, somebody has obviously decided that the number of people whose lives have been forever damaged or destroyed by someone's psychotic episode is still small enough that controversy and publicity can safely be generated on their backs. You can poke fun at these victims' suffering without much risk of lawsuits.

In a smarter world, we'd just let this thing come and go without anything more than a sneer. Hell, I feel bad even giving it as much press as this, but since CNN and a few newspapers have already caught a whiff of another "controversial" game, I decided a little reality check couldn't make things much worse. Unfortunately the scam is going to work once again. Is the general-interest press going to freak out and give POSTAL free publicity? Probably. Are other creatively bankrupt goons going to try this routine every time they feel the need to make a media splash? Without a doubt. Are the real-life victims going to feel like they have been kicked hard in the gut by these cretins? Sadly, yes.

But will POSTAL be a great game?

Hard to say at this point, but if the designers were so sure of themselves and the quality of their work, I doubt they would be planning to waste half their strategy guide on a study of real-life massacres. Not much on gameplay, but it sure will stir people up, eh?

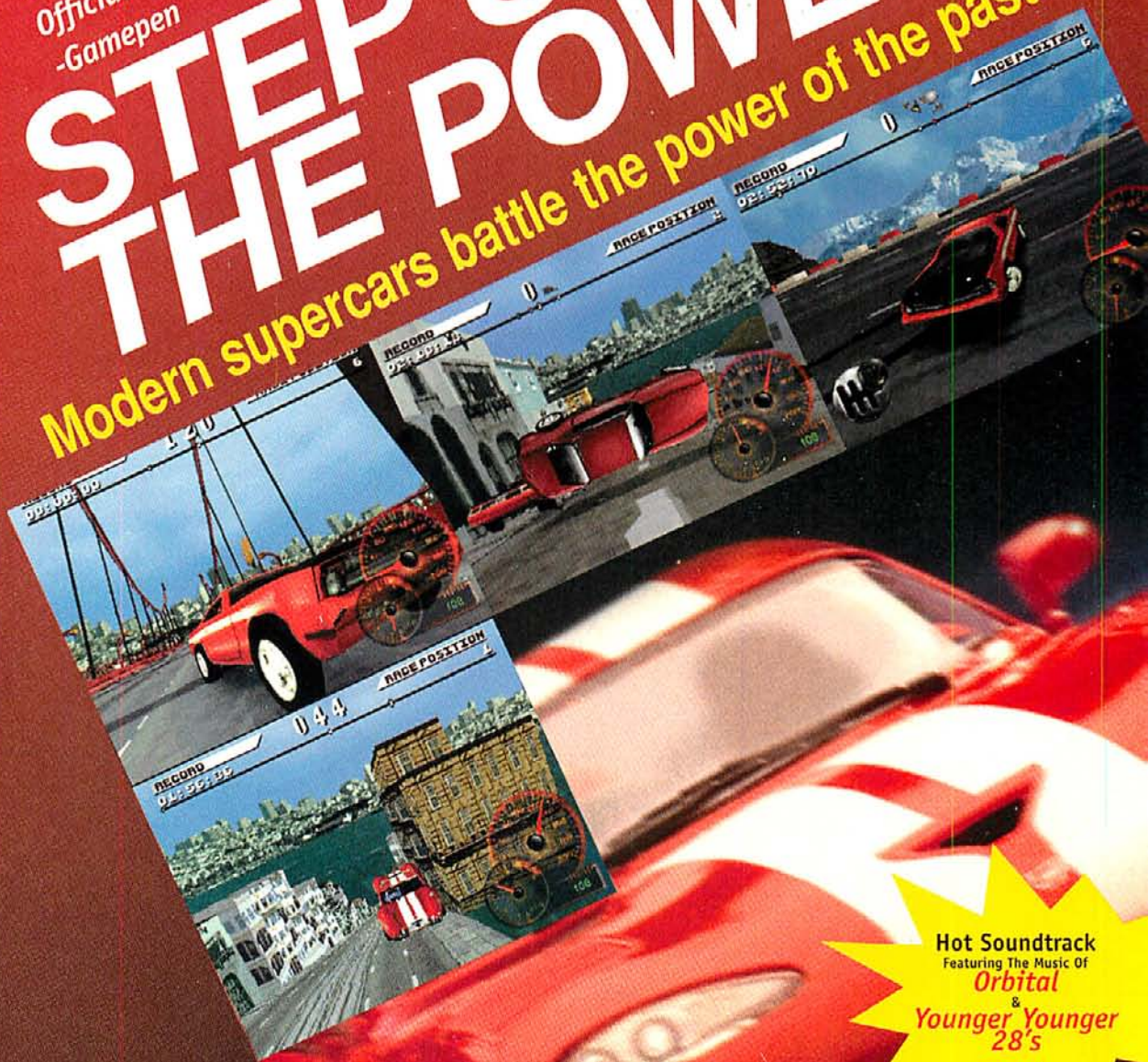
As for why games focus on the violent and dark in the first place, see Johnny Wilson's editorial this month, as he discusses the rationale behind the "fear factor" in computer gaming.

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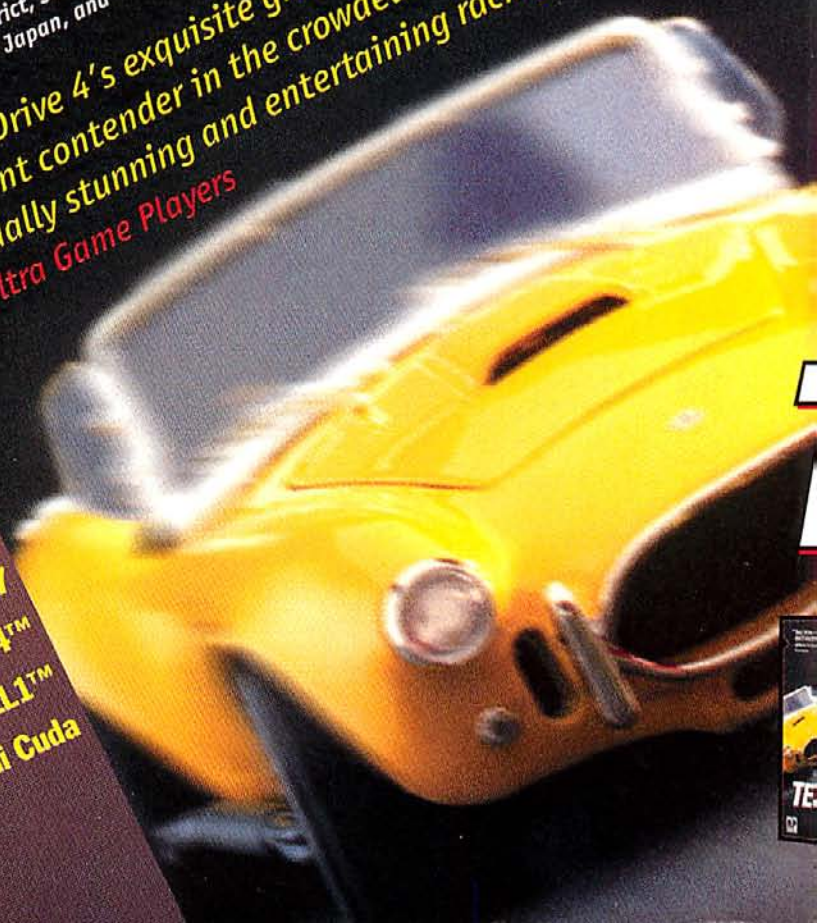
5 Exotic Tracks: San Francisco, England's Lake District, Swiss-Italian Alps, Kyoto City in Japan, and Washington DC.

True Driving Physics let you really feel what it's like to be behind the wheel of a '71 Hemi Cuda or a Jaguar XJ220!

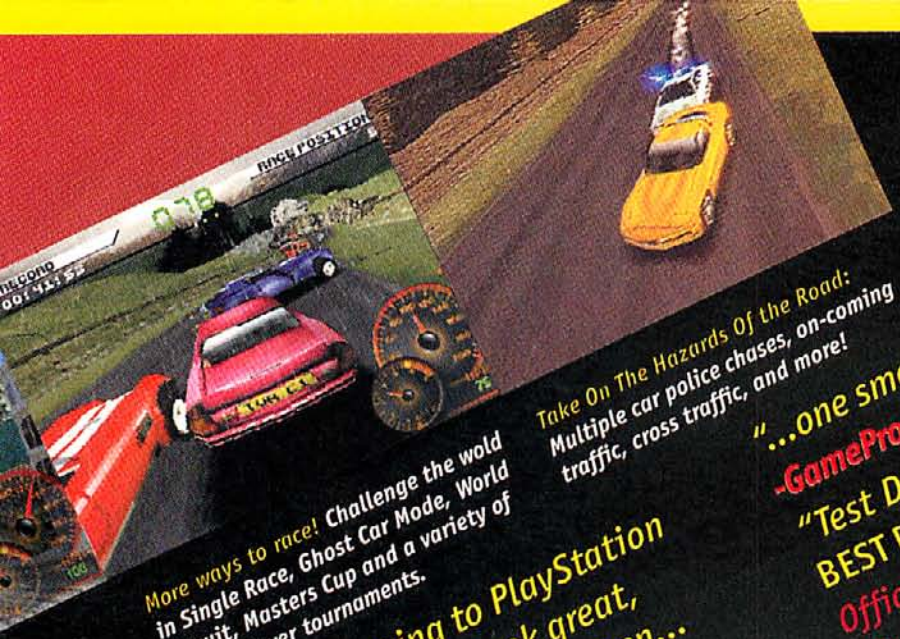
"Test Drive 4's exquisite graphics make it an instant contender in the crowded racing genre... visually stunning and entertaining racing game"
-Ultra Game Players

Modern supercars:
- Jaguar XJ 220™
- Dodge® Viper GTS
- TVR™ Cerbera
- Chevrolet® Corvette™
- Nissan 300ZX®

Power of the past:
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- '69 Chevrolet® Corvette™ 427
- '70 Chevrolet® Chevelle SS 454™
- '69 Chevrolet® Camaro ZL1™
- '71 Plymouth® Hemi Cuda



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